

**THE LIFE**  
**OF THE.**  
**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.**





# THE LIFE OF THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

BY

HIS EASTERN AND WESTERN DISCIPLES,  
THE ADVAITA ASHRAMA, HIMALAYAS.

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## CXXI.

### IN EASTERN BENGAL AND ASSAM.

When the Swami arrived in Calcutta from Mayavati, on the twenty-fourth of January 1901, it was to the great pleasure of his *gurubhāis* and disciples there, who had been anxious to have him again in their midst for a long period. For some days the Swami was full of chat concerning the Advaita Ashrama, Mrs. Sevier and the little band of his Sannyāsin disciples there, and his words were those of the highest praise and satisfaction. As was his characteristic he forgot all the momentary irritation he had occasionally shown in his childlike impatience to one or other of them, and could now see them only in the very best light, and hold them up to his other disciples as examples of self-sacrifice, devotion and service. He especially referred to the Swami Virajananda's tact and coolness of temper on the hill-journey to Mayavati and to his untiring faculty for *sevā*, and in high amusement he laughed over the discomfitures he had endured at Paurhāṇi. He repeatedly expressed his longing to return again to the beautiful scenery, the salubrious climate and the precious soothing quiet of the Himalayan jungles sometime in the future, to pass the last days of his life in meditation, and in writing books recording in a systematic form his personal experiences and deductions on Hindu thought-systems and religion for the guidance of posterity. In fact, he now much regretted that he had left the hills so soon.

Before leaving for Mayavati, the Swami had remained at the Belur monastery for not more than eighteen days, during which time he had discovered and was greatly satisfied at the remarkable progress that had been made along all lines since his absence in the West. Classes of various kinds had been held, physical exercises had been introduced, and there were appointed hours for meditation and spiritual exercise.

New *Brahmachārins* had joined the Order, and his own disciples and *guruḥhāis* were strenuously occupied in various ways of studying, teaching, training and serving.

Again in the midst of his followers and workers, the Swami's mind was full of big plans, but in the midst of his intentions, when he had remained in the monastery barely seven weeks, pressing invitations reached him to visit Dacca and Eastern Bengal. To add to these invitations was the great desire of his own mother to go on a pilgrimage to the holy places in Eastern Bengal and Assam. Another reason for acceding to these invitations was the fact that his health was again failing. Only those immediately about him knew how rapidly he was declining. He saw also that in his present condition, work on any considerable scale, requiring great concentration of mind and energy of will, was impossible for him. The time he remained in Calcutta, therefore, he spent either at the monastery or at Balaram Babu's house in Baghbazar in the metropolis, his sole occupation being the private training and instruction of those who surrounded him, or else light reading or attending to the correspondence that poured in upon him from various quarters of the world.

It was on the eighteenth of March that in company with a large party of his *Sannyāsin* disciples the Swami left Calcutta. He arrived at Dacca on the next day. As soon as the steamer from Goalunda reached Narayanganj, some resident gentlemen of Dacca, who had come as representatives of the reception committee, welcomed him cordially. When the train reached Dacca in the afternoon, Babu Ishwar Chandra Ghosh, the renowned pleader, and Babu Gagan Chandra Ghosh received the Swami in the name of the people of the city. The railway station was literally packed with masses of people who greeted him with enthusiastic shouts of "Victory to Ramakrishna Dēva!" The numerous students who read in the educational centres of the city were everywhere in evidence; and as the Swami drove in the magnificent carriage and pair that had been brought for his conveyance, the students ran all the way keeping pace with

the horses. The route of the procession led through the main thoroughfares of this large place until it finally reached the mansion of the late Babu Mohini Mohan Das, Zamindar, which had been appointed for the Swami's use during his sojourn in Dacca. Here scores of citizens had foregathered to get a sight of Swamiji.

As the occasion of the Budhashtami festival was near at hand, the Swami went by boat to Langalbundh with his disciples and his mother's party of lady-pilgrims, there to bathe in the Brahmaputra river. According to previous arrangement, he met his mother's party on the 25th of March at Narayangunj, whither they arrived by steamer on the same day in charge of his three monastic disciples. Swamiji passed the night in a *bazra*, or house-boat, on the Sitalaksha, and on the next day taking another boat the whole party left for Langalbundh arriving there on the following morning. The Sitalaksha leads to the Dhaleshwari, which again falls into the Brahmaputra. Tradition has sanctified Langalbundh with the Pauranic legend of the Incarnation, Sri Parasurama. The festival had drawn large crowds, and from the passenger-boats the pilgrims sent up continuously joyous shouts of praise in honour of the Lord. After bathing at the *Tirtha* Swamiji and his party returned to Dacca, having fully enjoyed the trip.

Both before and after his pilgrimage, his dwelling-place at Dacca was besieged by numerous visitors. To these he gave instructions at all hours of the day, particularly for two or three hours in the afternoon. In these talks, among other subjects, he spoke on Jnânam, Bhakti, Faith, Renunciation, Discrimination, Non-attachment and Karma Yoga. More than a hundred persons attended these informal meetings, particularly such as had looked forward with great eagerness to his coming to these parts. All were struck with his gracious manner and charming personality, and found his teachings full of a living faith and devotion, and infusing in their delivery an intense vitality and power.

At the earnest request of the educated community of

Dacca, the Swami gave a lecture, on the thirtieth of March, lasting for an hour, at the Jagannath College before two thousand people, taking for his subject, "What Have I Learnt?" On the next day he again lectured, this time for about two hours on the open maidan, adjoining Pogose School. Three thousand people attended on this occasion, the subject of his discourse being, "The Religion We Are Born In." (For reports of both lectures, see "The Complete Works of the Swami Vivekananda, Mayavati Memorial Edition," pages 736 742). Both the addresses gained the Swami tremendous applause, and as the result hundreds were drawn to make a diligent study of his message and his plans for the amelioration of the Indian peoples.

Referring to the Swami and his first lecture, the "Dacca Gazette" in its issue of Monday, April 1, 1901, says :

"\*\* This famous man (Swami Vivekananda) is now in our midst. He went in for an ablution at the Langalbundh ghât on the occasion of the last, Budhashtami; and returning to Dacca, delivered an interesting speech at the Jagannath College premises on the evening of Saturday last—the subject of his discourse being, 'What Have I Learnt?' Beginning with an expression of his pleasure at the opportunity that his coming to East Bengal has afforded him, to acquire that intimate knowledge of this part of the country which he hitherto sadly lacked in spite of his wanderings over many civilised countries in the West, as well as his gratification at the sight of majestic rivers, wide fertile plains and picturesque villages in his own country of Bengal, which he had not the good fortune of witnessing for himself before, he referred to the fact that it was many years now since he had found Hinduism to be the only perfectly satisfying religion in the world. He therefore deplored the existence of the widespread indifferentism in respect of religion among his own countrymen professing such a unique faith, though he was very well aware, as he remarked, of the unfavourable materialistic conditions in which they passed their lives, owing to the diffusion of European modes of thought in their great country. He also deplored the existence in the country of certain reformers who wanted to reform their religion, or rather to turn it topsy-turvy, with a view to the regeneration of the Hindu nation. There were, of course, he added, some thoughtful people among them, but there were also people who followed others blindly and acted most foolishly not knowing what they were about. Then there were others who were mad after scientific explanations of Hindu



customs, rites, etc., and who were always talking of electricity, magnetism, air vibrations and those sorts of things ; and who would perhaps some day define God Himself as a mass of vibrations !!

"In fact, the Swami was nothing if not smart. That he could talk with the greatest fluency was a well-known fact ; but that he was so great a humorist and so apt at repartee was a new experience to many of his hearers. He had a fling at the Christians in general, and the missionaries in particular, and he was deservedly hard on the materialistic tendencies of the age. . . .

"As to what he had learnt being the subject of his lecture, he put forth in telling language the well-known essential condition of progress in the path of spirituality which, he averred, was only to be found in Hinduism, including idolatry. This idolatry he defended with all the wit he could command, ridiculing people who had anything to say against that phase of our national religion. To attain spirituality, he observed, one must be disgusted with the world, especially with lust and wealth ; he must then be burning with a desire to see God ;—he was careful to say that his God was not Nature or any similar idea. But these were not all, that is, disgust with the world and burning desire for God were not sufficient ; the devotee must seek and accept a Guru or spiritual guide who was to be his counsellor, philosopher, friend and guide. In short, the Guru was the *sine qua non* for spiritual progress according to the preacher under notice ; and we are not surprised that crowds of people, mostly young men, are flocking to him for advice and illumination in regard to the one thing needful in our life. The Swami advocates, as he practises, celibacy, and many of his disciples are fighting shy of matrimony with results that we are at present unable to foresee.\*\*\*"

In his second lecture the Swami pointed out the spiritual greatness which the Hindu race had attained in the past. At the same time he warned the present generation not merely to vegetate upon their long-past ancestral glory, but to exert themselves for new things. There had been great Rishis of old, he said, but they too must strive to become greater Rishis than any of them. The Swami then touched upon the common grounds of agreement in Hinduism, upon the important part the Scriptures of the world had played in the survival of specific religions, upon the *Vedas* with their twofold division of the *Karma-Kānda* and the *Jnana-Kānda*, and the desirability of the study of the *Vedas* without distinction of caste or sex. In this connection he pointed

out that nowhere in the *Vedas* was there any injunction proscribing the right of anyone to them. That was only met with in the *Purānas*, which were of a much later date and contained many inaccuracies and contradictions. In speaking of the *Tantras* Swamiji referred to the appropriation of the Vedic *Yāga Yajnas* by the Buddhists themselves under the name of *Tantras*, stating that the *Brāhmaṇa* portions of the *Vedas* had been modified and incorporated in the body of the *Tantras*. The *Tantras*, he said, barring some of the abominable practices such as *Vāmāchāra*, were not so bad as people were inclined to think. Then he discussed the principles of Hinduism, such as, *Ishwara*, *Atman* and *Jagat*, on their grounds of unity and spoke of the distinction in the psychology of *Vedānta* and Western philosophy, the latter stopping at mind, the former, reaching beyond mind and declaring the glory of the *Atman* as the only Reality in the universe. For this reason, as he said, the Western outlook on life was enjoyment and organised action, the Indian, renunciation and search of the mysteries of the internal world. The secret of *Avatāravāda*, he stated, was the worship of Man—to see God in man was the real God-vision. Not through Nature to Nature's God did the Hindu go, but to Man's God through Man himself. He also spoke of the debasing influence of sweeping and unsympathetic reforms, and defended Image-worship against the foolish attacks and condemnations of a certain section of Hindus. He concluded by saying: ".....stretch forth a helping hand and open the gates of knowledge to one and all, and give the down-trodden masses once more their just and legitimate privileges."

A touching incident happened while Swamiji was at Dacca. One day a young prostitute bedecked with jewelry from head to foot came in a phaeton with her mother to see him. He was then in an inner apartment. Jatin Babu, the host, and the disciples hesitated at first, but took word to Swamiji, and he at once ordered them to admit the women to his presence. After they had bowed to him and taken

their seat, the woman who was the daughter, told Swamiji that she was suffering from Asthma and begged him to give some medicine to cure her. Swamiji expressed sympathy and replied : "See here, mother ! I too am suffering from Asthma and have not been able to cure myself. I wish I could do something for you." These words spoken with childlike simplicity and loving kindness touched the women as well as the audience. The former left shortly after, receiving his blessings.

The Swami did not leave Dacca before he had gained personal disciples and numerous adherents to his own ideas and to the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna.

From Dacca he next proceeded to visit the famous places of pilgrimage, Chandranath and Kamakhya, and sojourned for some days at Goalpara and then at the beautiful station of Gauhati in Assam. At the latter place he delivered three lectures, which were unfortunately not reported, but of which those who heard them say, "They were brilliant ! The Swami was full of fire and his language was so beautiful and direct ! Never before had we had such an exposition of our Dharma !"

Both at Dacca and later in Kamakhya, the Swami's health grew from bad to worse ; and, feeling exceedingly unwell, he decided to make the journey of sixty-three miles from Gauhati to the more delightful hill-station of Shillong, where the air being much drier, it was thought that his health might rapidly improve. Shillong was then the seat of the Assam Government, and the late Sir H. E. A. Cotton, a celebrated champion of the Indian Cause, was the then Chief-Commissioner of Assam. He had heard much of the Swami Vivekananda and was anxious to see him. At his request, the Swami delivered a lecture before the resident English officials and a large gathering of Indians, all of whom including Sir Henry Cotton expressed themselves as highly gratified with his instructive explanation of Indian culture and ideals. Later, Sir Henry Cotton himself visited the Swami at the latter's residence and said, "Swamiji, after travelling

in Europe and America, what have you come to see here in these distant, jungly hill-tracts? Who will appreciate you here?" He and the Swami exchanged many pleasant courtesies. Seeing that the Swami was ill, he instructed the Civil-Surgeon to render him every possible medical aid. From that time, throughout the Swami's long stay, the Chief-Commissioner made inquiries concerning him, morning and evening, and expressed his regret that his health was still on the decline. The Swami always spoke of him as a man who truly understood India's needs and aspirations and worked nobly for her cause, and as such, he deserved the love of all the Indian peoples.

It was true that the Swami's health was now failing altogether. Besides diabetes from which he had been suffering, he had had at Dacca another very severe attack of asthma. His disciples were very anxious on his behalf and some were even in despair, when it was discovered that the climate of Shillong also had proved of little avail. On the occasion of this particular fit of asthma, the Swami himself was hopeless; and those who attended him were in great fear lest now indeed the end might come. He could hardly breathe; and reclining on a pile of cushions with his head and arms bent forwards, he laboured more than an hour for breath. At that time his thought, as it had been in Vaidyanath on a similar occasion, rested in the Infinite. And in a moment of Self-realisation he spoke half-dreamily, as if whispering to himself: "What does it matter! I have given them enough for fifteen hundred years!" The drift of his idea was that he could now die in peace as he had given his message to the world, and that did the Western nations accept his spiritual ideals and India adopt his plans for her regeneration, the task of realisation before both could easily engage generations of mankind for fifteen hundred years; for, the realisation of the spiritual consciousness, which was his one ideal for both East and West, might occupy ages of time for whole races, though here and there many individuals, it is true, would reach the goal

The Swami returned to the monastery at Calcutta in the second week of May. Of his experience in Eastern Bengal and Assam he spoke much. In religious matters, he remarked, the people of those parts were very conservative, and even fanatical in some respects. Though his disciples observed the strictest orthodoxy there, once plied by a Don't-touchist with too much questioning, the Swami stated that he had told him, "‘Man, I am a Fakir ! What is caste or custom to me !’ Does not the Shâstra enjoin : ‘A Sannyâsin may live on alms collected by *mâdhukari* method, even from the hands of a person of a *mlechchha* family ?’ ”

Speaking of fanaticism he related the story of the sentimental youth at Dacca, who bringing a photograph of some individual had questioned him if So-and-so was an Avatâra. After explaining himself on the point he had said to him in an endearing way, "My boy, how can I know?" But the man repeated his question three or four times and Swamiji patiently replied in the same words. "At last," said Swamiji, "seeing that the man still persisted with a view to receive an affirmative answer from me, I was obliged to tell him, ‘My boy, take my advice ; henceforth develop your muscles and your brain by taking good food and healthy exercise, and then you will be able to think for yourself on the subject. Without nourishing food your brain seems to have dried up.’ Perhaps the man did not like to be told the plain truth. But what else could I do? Unless I warned such people they would be in a fair way to lunacy."

"You may think of your Guru as an Avatâra," continued the Swami, "or whatever you like. But Incarnations of God are few and far between. There have arisen in Dacca itself three or four Avatâras, I heard ! Indeed, there is a craze for them nowadays, it seems !"

Much Tânticism prevailed in Kamakhya, he said. In those parts he had come across the worship of one Hankara Deva, who was regarded as an Avatâra, the followers of whom were Tantric Sannyâsins. This ancient sect had a very wide following in those parts. He said that Vaishnavism

was more generally spread in Dacca than in any of those parts from which he had just returned.

Speaking of the physical aspects of the provinces and of the people he remarked, that the Brahmaputra Valley was beyond compare, and the beauty of the Shillong hills was charming; and that the people were much hardier and more active in type than those on the Calcutta side. What they did, they did in a dogged fashion. Though they lived much on flesh and fish, and for that reason were stronger and more *râjasic* than the Western Bengal type, they used altogether too much oil and *ghee* in their cooking, a thing which he did not approve because it tended to much obesity in the system. He said also that it was most desirable that Eastern and Western Bengal should be thoroughly harmonised and united.

It will be remembered that Nag Mahashaya, the great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, who regarded the Swami as the Incarnation of Shiva Himself, had been born in these parts. He left his body in Samâdhi in December of 1899. One of the lay-disciples questioned the Swami as to whether he had visited the home of this saint. The Swami replied most enthusiastically: "Yes, indeed! He was such a great saint! Was it likely that, when visiting so near his birthplace, which was only seven or eight miles from Dacca, I would fail to visit the house in which he lived? How charming is his house, just like a peace retreat, a veritable place of pilgrimage! His worthy wife fed me with many excellent dishes cooked by her own hands. She was so mother-like and insisted that I must eat to my heart's content. While there I took a swimming bath in a tank. Then returning, I had such a siesta that it was half-past-two in the afternoon before I awoke. Of the few days that I have had a sound sleep in my life, that in Nag Mahashaya's house was assuredly one of the most blessed. On getting up I had a sumptuous feast. Nag Mahashaya's wife also gave me a cloth which I tied round my head as a turban and started for Dacca. I found that Nag Mahashaya's photo was being worshipped,

The place of his Samadhi, the spot where his ashes are kept, ought to be preserved in a better way than is now the case. Eastern Bengal will do well to study and appreciate that great soul, who has sanctified the whole province by his birth, and by his living that wonderful life there."



## CXXII.

### AS THE MASTER LIVED IN HIS MONASTERY.

After his return from the tour in Eastern Bengal and Assam, which was the last public tour undertaken by the Swami, he was much worse in health. The monks were much concerned as to the turn the disease had taken and the much more serious turn that it might take at any time. They would hear now of nothing save a complete rest for him from work; they begged him to give up all thought of appearing before the public until he should be really well. So the Swami, to please his *gurubhāis* and disciples, forsook his plans for still further work and dwelt at the monastery for seven months in comparative retirement. Those about him did all they could to nurse him back to recovery, to obtain for himself the best medical treatment available, and to divert his mind to lighter subjects. But they found that the latter was an exceedingly difficult task, for his mind by instinct merged in the deepest concentration. Oftentimes, while his disciples stood in his presence, waiting for him to receive the personal attention he had asked for, such as fetching a glass of water, or a *chhillum* of tobacco, he had forgotten about it completely, and even when they said, "Swamiji, Swamiji, we have attended to your order!" he did not hear them. Of course, casual teaching he was always engaged in, even at this period. He kept in touch, also, with the general movement of his work in various parts of the world and was happy at the thought that everywhere, whether in America, or England or India itself, his ideas were gaining firmer ground. Oftentimes he would sing himself and teach his disciples seated about him to sing and join in chorus with him. Or else, he would become engaged in conversation, now on merry and then on some serious subjects, but in the latter case, his *gurubhāis* would imme-



diately draw him into talks on even frivolous matters, which they knew would afford him relaxation from undue tension of the mind.

People flocked to the Belur monastery in these days from all parts of India to receive the Swami's blessings and instructions. He moved amongst them like a father amidst his children ; and of each newcomer to the monastery he made loving inquiries. His eyes rested on all the manifold works of the Math to their minutest details, and even the servants he treated as his own. They vied with each other to render him the slightest service. And whensoever he went to Calcutta by boat, the rowers were as much interested in his personality as his own disciples. Sometimes he would wander over the monastery, nude except for a *kaupina*. Or in the simple garment of the *alkhalla*, the long robe of the wondering monk, he would stroll, immersed in thought, along the village-paths that led from the monastery gates to the highroad. Or again, he might seat himself wheresoever the moment found him, by the Ganges side, or under the spreading branches of some inviting tree in the monastery compound, there to meditate on his Guru, or the Mother, or the Infinite. Or it might be that he would spend the day in Calcutta, or with books in his own room at the Math. And often he would return to those fiery moods of old and make the monastery throb with the spiritual consciousness as he had done in the Baranagore Math of former memories. Or he would discourse concerning forgotten kingdoms and dead emperors until, in his vivid presentation, mighty captains and heroes and mightier Rishis who gave laws to them,—as the Christian monks did to the Emperor Justinian of the East Roman Empire,—arose in all the actuality of life before his interested hearers.

With reference to his more intimate discourses with his *gurubhâis* and disciples, they were most diverse and complex. They included such topics as : the meditation on death and the renunciation that comes therefrom ; the renunciation of *Kamini-Kanchana* as the true test of spiritual progress ; the

necessity of boundless faith, specially in one's own self, of strict *Brahmacharyam* and of the making of *REAL MEN* in the work of the regeneration of the Motherland ; the music and the literature of India and the necessity of rendering the former stirring and free from effeminacy and the latter living and vigorous ; the Gurukula system ; the establishment of Maths with Sadhus in charge of adjoining colleges to teach Western science as coupled with the Vedanta ; the points of contrast between European and Asiatic art ; the need of technical education ; the secret of Japan's greatness ; the evils of the Kula-Guru system in Bengal ; the discrimination of the four castes according to birth and qualification, and how to rehabilitate them on a sound basis ; the alleviation of poverty, the crying problem of India ; the secular as well as spiritual training of Sannyâsins ; the simultaneous practice of Karma, Yoga, Bhakti and Jnânâ ; the doctrine of Avatâra and the Divinity and Mission of Sri Ramakrishna ; the Nirvikalpa Samadhi and the Realisation of Brahman ; sympathy for the distressed, and the ways and means of raising the sinking masses in India ; the Omnipresence of Divinity, even in the lowest ; the extent of God's mercy ; the eradication of "Don't-Touchism", sectarian quarrels and caste-hypocrisy ; the widening of the bounds of caste by inter-marrying among its own subdivisions ; the position and awakening of Indian womanhood ; the greatness of the Vedic Rishis ; the introduction of worship of spiritual heroes like Rama, Mahavira Hanuman and Sri Krishna of the Gîtâ for the purpose of infusing strength and fearlessness in the weakened national veins. These themes and others similar to these formed generally the topics which were both an instruction and a delight to those who heard. In fact, his discourses included the whole range of Hindu Religion, philosophy, sociology, science and numerous other departments of knowledge, on which he dwelt in a masterly way throwing new light on them.

Often in this time the Swami would be lost in song or meditation, dwelling in regions other than this world. And

yet on many days he himself would supervise the cooking arrangements and prepare delicacies for the inmates of the monastery, even if requested not to do so, as by the nature of the disease, he would be oppressed with thirst by stooping over the fire. And again he would be visited by deeper moods, and by thoughts of India and India's problems ; and in such moods he would now and then pass some casual remark that vibrated with the great power of his thought. At times, his very appearance was so saturated with a power beyond this world that he became unapproachable. Altogether, how sweet and yet majestic was his personality in these days ! The way in which he spoke even of trifling matters, would make the monks ponder on each word. Now he would be playful, then serious, but at all times, an amazing personality, of which each new manifestation was, to those who loved him, both human and divine at one and the same time. Now he would explain one idea, and then its opposite in an equally convincing way ; now he would be all monk, and then all patriot, now all scholar, then all saint. And all marvelled at the tremendous insight, partly inherent, partly acquired through the intensest study and observation, which he manifested in spite of his oppressive illness. True, his body might have become worn out, but in these days one became more and more aware that his mind was infinitely luminous, and the brother-disciples stood in awe of him though they still regarded him as "Noren", their boy-friend. Disease might have ruined the body, but it could never touch the mind or soul. And it must always be remembered that the Swami's affliction was not uninterrupted. As is often peculiar to diabetes, he had periods of relief from pain and the sense of great exhaustion that came upon him. And though it was true that by degrees the disease was fastening its hold upon the body, there were times even now when he felt somewhat as he had of old. But at these very times his *gurubhāis* and well-wishers were most earnest in their entreaty that he should rest, lest sudden and renewed exertion should prove baneful. But he heeded their

words only temporarily. It would have been as easy to lift a mountain as to have kept that mind, which had taught the world, in check. Besides, it was evident that his interest in life was growing very indifferent. And his words, spoken in former times, were brought to the minds of his disciples, "For one thing we may be grateful ; this life is *not* eternal !" Indeed, through the very power of his thought he was already intuitively loosening his personality from the trammels of the body. Nearer and nearer the time was drawing when he would give it up entirely.

And how he was loved in the monastery ! What a beautiful, sweet, intensely human personality he had ! His was the power of binding souls to himself in the most intimate human communion and relationship. His *gurbhāis* and disciples simply abandoned themselves to him and would have gone to the ends of the earth to please him or obey his commands. No sacrifice was counted too great to perform for his sake, for they were slaves to their love for him, and he the very autocrat of their hearts. He moved in their midst, a gracious, manly, godly personality. When they had not seen him for some days, the simple sight of him again would cause them ecstasy. Most of his Hindu disciples were men of little worldly position, but of no mean spiritual understanding, and that was the very reason why he loved them all the more. He was to them irresistible and their love for him knew no bounds. Theirs was the greatness of the heart, and he stood amongst them always as the ideal man, the treasure of their hearts. His personality was for them the rare combination of ineffable sweetness and lordly grandeur. His eyes, his whole countenance, the manner in which he walked and spoke, were for them all soul-enthraling. Did he put on a new *gerrua* or tie his turban in a new fashion, even such a trifling incident would be the event of the day. It was all wonderful to them. He was for his disciples a spark of the radiance and tenderness of God made manifest ; and therefore each human revelation had to them a touch of the divine as well. Sometimes he was as the

Child ; and they took pride in all his human lovable-ness and weakness and glory. In such moments philosophy was an abstraction for them, theology was unreal, the gods were only Images. Aye, he was the charmer of their hearts.

Then again, he was to them the manifestation of Power. Some of the monks would see in him the Lord of Monks incarnate, as it were, as they looked upon his luminous face. In his presence they would feel a Power which would make them defy all the weakness and the bondage of Maya. Moments would come when they would be saturated with the consciousness of things beyond the world, and their souls would tremble with spiritual passion. His, they said, was the radiance of Shiva.

Did he sit silent by himself they would look upon him, some with tenderness, others with awe. For his thoughts were always prodigious like high mountains, or luminous like suns. When he sat in silent abstraction in the grand isolation of his soul, they loved the tense and wrapt expression of beatitude and power written on his face. There were times when his eyes seemed looking at nowhere in the distance, revealing the faraway-ness of his soul from ordinary life. He would sit in the upper verandah of the monastery, gazing intently sometimes at the turrets of the Temple of the Mother, which loomed high above the trees of that grove of many memories at Dakshineswar. Sometimes he would sit and look across the monastery grounds, wondering at that which was to come in future years. Or his eyes would look steadfastly across the river and he would wonder as to the destinies of his land. In these moments of tense thought, his eyes were as deep as the seas, and his mind was concentrated as if to fathom the very depths of his inmost being. Lost in contemplation, his face would sometimes reveal an ineffable sadness of soul, and at other times the tempest of a great ecstasy in vision. To the outside world, he was the famous Vivekananda, the preacher, the teacher and the patriot ; to his brother-monks he was the monk, the saint, the leader, the friend, the child, the master, the beloved

one, the son of Sri Ramakrishna and the Mother,—their all-in-all.

Sometimes after walking on the lawn he would sit under the *Vilva*-tree in the monastery grounds to rest or to meditate, and on many occasions he would lose the sense of the outer world, being aware only of the subject and the vision of his thought. And now at an angle opposite the tree, stands the chapel of the Swami Vivekananda where his ashes rest and where the marble altar indicates the very spot of ground on which the body was cremated. A favourite seat of his was under the big Mango tree in the courtyard between Sri Ramakrishna's chapel and the monastery building. Here he would be found mostly in the morning hours seated on a canvas cot, attending to his correspondence, writing articles or books, reading, or engaged in conversation.

The Swami's room was on the second story in the south-east corner of the monastery building. It was a large room with four windows and three doors, and used at one and the same time as his study and living quarters. In the corner to the right of the entrance-door stood a mirror some five feet high, and a little further on, a rack with his *gerrua* clothes. In the middle of the room was an iron bedstead fitted with a spring mattress given him by one of his Western disciples. But the Swami hardly ever used it and preferred to have a simple bed spread on the floor which was covered with mat and carpet. A couch stood near by towards the furthest corner. In the most comfortable part of the room was a knee-hole writing-table with letters and manuscripts, pen, ink, paper, a blotting-pad, a call-bell, some flowers in a metal vase and a photograph of the Master. In one part of the room was a deer-skin meditation *āsana*, in another a small table with a set of porcelain tea-cups, saucers and plates, which he occasionally used. Near it was the canvas cot. There was a large and handsome almirah against the wall on the left side of the entrance-door, which was full of many costly robes and turbans etc., used by him while in the West. Most

of the furniture and things mentioned above, were the gifts and presents of his Western disciples, and are now treasured at the Math with great care. But the most important object in the whole room was a picture of Bhagavân Sri Ramakrishna at which the Swami often gazed in love, reverence, and in meditation. His room served all purposes. Here he wrote, he thought, he gave instructions to his brother-monks and disciples, he received his friends, he sometimes had his meals, he slept, he meditated and communed with his God. And here, also, he passed from out his mortal form in the final meditation of his life. Even to this day a Presence remains ; a great halo of spirituality hovers over all. Now the room is kept most sacred. Indeed, the arrangement of things in it is the very same as when he left it on the day of the Supreme Insight. The calendar on the wall reads "July 4, 1902." The writing-table appears as though he had just risen from it to go perhaps to the chapel near-by. The rack is still used to hang his *gerrua* robes. Only on the walls and upon the couch and the beds the pictures of the Swami have been placed, and there is a life-size oil-painting of Sri Ramakrishna in a prominent place on the wall. Now the room is used for meditation. He who enters it bows down in reverence. And thousands upon thousands have come to visit it, some wondering, some weeping upon seeing it. For it speaks of the tenderness and greatness and power and human sweetness of him whose spirit has set their souls aflame.

The Swami loved the monastery and its surroundings. He loved his room. He was always glad to come back to it either from the West or after his travels in India, or even after a short absence in Calcutta. In a letter dated 19th December, 1900, he wrote to an American lady-disciple :

"Verily, I am a bird of passage ! Gay and busy Paris, grim old Constantinople, sparkling little Athens and Pyramidal Cairo are left behind, and here I am now, writing in my room in the Math on the Ganges. It is so quiet and still, the broad river is dancing in the bright sunshine, only now and then an occasional cargo-boat breaking the

silence with the splashing of the oars. It is the cold season here..... Everything is green and gold and the grass is like velvet, and the air is cold and crisp and delightful.....”

Aye, the Swami loved the monastery and its silence and peace. He loved his brother-monks, his disciples and the many friends and visitors who came to pay their worship to the Presence in the chapel and to listen to his own words. But sometimes he was in a strange mood, demanding solitude, when none would dare approach his room. Sometimes he would remain in his room for hours without seeing anyone. Then he would emerge in radiance, or in wonderful peace, or in shining power, full of spiritual glory. Who knows what had transpired !

He was always frank and free, ruling, not so much by the authority of a system, but by the vigorous power and presence of his personality and love. He would sing *Kirtanas* with his brother-monks, or pace the monastery grounds lost in contemplation. On festivals he would join as the Leader in their spiritual exercises, play on musical instruments with them, and sing with them in spiritual joy in his sweet and thrilling voice for hours. He was the Leader in all things, the *life-centre* of the monastery.

And he would often joke and make fun with his *Gurubhāis* and tease them and make them laugh and laugh. At another time he would instruct them or help them in their difficulties, always manifesting his great tenderness for them. At one time he would reprimand them, but he would always speak of them to others with the greatest regard, remembering that they were the sons of the Master and that he was even as the servant of them all. It was joy and mutual impatience and love and mutual loving forgiveness,—for these were all brothers, being sons of the same spiritual parent and indeed the sons of the Great Mother Herself. And he—the Swami Vivekananda—was the central and the most luminous personality within it all. He was the Leader, the giant, the intellect, the heart and the soul of them all, loyal to them unto death, for had he not taken over all responsibilities on their score at



Cossipore and had not the Master given them all within his keeping? He was the irresistible magnet and they were as so many iron filings drawn towards him often not understanding why,—but always loving him with all their hearts.

He would rouse the monks from sleep in the early hours of the morning. He himself was always an early riser. He would order them to see that the regulations were strictly observed and followed. He would be in a righteous rage at any infringement of the monastery rules and would scold and fume at them. He would send them to practise austerities. But he would see that they did not go too far. His love would not allow them to suffer. Indeed, he *loved* them. It was all excitement and activity, and spiritual fervour and great training at the monastery.

On the other hand, the garden, the cooking, the care of the cows which the monastery kept, in fact, the very simplest things interested him. And to this day the monks recall how, boy-like, he would dispute with the Swami Brahmananda with regard to the boundaries that separated the pasture-field for the cows from the latter's vegetable and flower gardens, and the alleged trespassing on each other's rights. Sometimes he would playfully experiment on bread-making, trying all sorts of yeast, undaunted by repeated failures. He attributed the unhealthy climate of the Math to the want of pure water for drinking and cooking purposes, the river-water being too dirty, and, over and above this, too muddy in the rains. Desiring sometime back, to have a supply of pure water all the year round, he attempted with the help of his fellow-monks at sinking an artesian well, for which he had bought the necessary appliances, though he knew that with his meagre knowledge on the subject success was most improbable. Even when he was ill and could scarcely descend the stairs, and though his thirst was great and he was not permitted to touch water, he would stand over the kitchen fire and prepare delicacies which he would distribute to his brethren and disciples. At other times, dressed in his *Gerrua Alkhalla* and Sadhu's cap, and carrying a thick club

in his hand, he would call a number of his *gurubhāis* and disciples to go out for a walk with him and would make merry with them on the highroad. He would be as gay as ever at such times. On many occasions he had the whole monastery roaring with laughter at the jokes or funny stories he would tell. At these moments everyone would forget that the leader was ill at all.

After coming back from Eastern Bengal the Swami gave up all responsibility of public work and devoted himself to a number of pets he had acquired from various sources, including Bāghā, the Math dog, a she-goat which he playfully called "Hansi," or "Swan," several cows, sheep, ducks, geese, an antelope, a stork, and a kid which he named "Matru," and on the neck of which he placed a string of tiny jingling bells. Wheresoever he went the kid accompanied him. And those who came to the Math in great reverence to see the man who had shaken the Parliament of Religions and dictated spirituality to the East and the West, were overcome with a wonderful love for his sweet human personality when they found him playing and running hither and thither like a boy of five years to amuse his favourite kid. When it died he was as sorry as a child, and he told his disciple, Sarat Chandra, "How strange! Whomsoever I love and fondle die early!" He himself would see that the animals were properly fed and their places were kept clean and dry. Swamī Sadananda was his chief helper in the fulfilment of all his desires in connection with the pets. These animals loved him exceedingly, and he would speak with them as though they were actually human. And once he said playfully, that Matru was really a relation of his in a former existence; the kid had access to his room and used to sleep on a couch there as though it had every right to do so. Sometimes the Swami would go to "Hansi" and beg her for milk for his tea, as though she could refuse or give as she might choose. Swamiji dearly loved his animals. Even in a letter to an American lady-disciple, dated the seventh of September, 1901, he writes fondly referring to them :

"The rains have come down now in right earnest and it is a deluge, pouring, pouring, pouring, night and day. The river is rising, flooding the banks ; the ponds and tanks have overflowed. I have just now returned from lending a hand in cutting a deep drain to take off the water from the Math grounds. The rain-water stands at places several feet deep. My huge stork is full of glee. My tame antelope fled from the Math and gave us some days of anxiety in finding him out. One of my ducks unfortunately died yesterday. She has been gasping for breath more than a week. One of my waggish old monks says, 'Sir, it is no use living in the Kali yuga when ducks catch cold from damp and rain and frogs sneeze'. One of the geese was losing her feathers. Knowing no other method of treatment, I left her some minutes in a tub of water mixed with a mild carbolic solution, so that it might either kill or heal her,—and she is all right now. \* \* \*"

In one sense Bagha was the master of the group of animals at the Math ; he felt that the monastery was his by right. Once he had been taken across the Ganges for some gross misconduct, and left there so that he might not come back to the Math again. But so great was his sorrow and so great his love for the Swami that he jumped into the ferry-boat in the evening, and when the boatman and the passengers tried to dislodge him, he glared and growled at them in such a savage manner that they did not dare dispute his right to remain. He landed safely on the other bank and passed the night somewhere unnoticed by anybody. The next morning the Swami, going to his bath room at about four O'clock as usual, stumbled across an object lying in front of the door. What was his surprise to see that it was Bagha, who now wound himself round his feet, as if begging him to allow him to remain ! Swamiji patted him on the back assuring him of protection. Later on, he related the incident to the brother-monks and told them that whatever Bagha might do, he should never be sent away any more. The animal seemed to have known that it was to the Swami he must go for readmittance, and that if he permitted him to stay, others might say or do what they would, he would not be sent away. He knew also just where he would find the Swami before others were awake, and therefore he had chosen that as the meeting-place.

There are many strange stories current in the Math about Bagha. As an instance : As soon as gongs and conch-shells proclaimed the beginning or the end of the auspicious moments of an eclipse, he in common with hundreds of devout men and women would take a dip in the Ganges of his own accord ! Long after the Swami's departure when Bagha was dead, the body was thrown in a remote part of the Math grounds on the bank of the Ganges, and was carried away by the high tide. But what was the surprise of the monks when they found that the corpse had been brought back there with the low ebb ! Taking it as a sign of Bagha's great attachment to the Math, so much so that even in death he refused to part from it, a Brahmacharin asked the permission of the elders, which was granted, to inter the body in the Math grounds, and a pile of bricks still marks the spot.

Here in the monastery the Swami was free from the monotony of society, and its tiresome conventionalities. Here he could do as he liked. Here in the abode of monks he was free and could throw off all restraints. Here he walked about, sometimes with *hookah* in hand, sometimes with a staff, but always a wonderful personality. Here he could go about bare-foot, or with the simple Bengali *chatties* or slippers into which one need only slip one's feet and walk. Here he could go about in *Koupina*, or clothed with a piece of *gerrua*. Here he was in his monastic garb, free from the coat, vest, trousers and boots of his Western experience, and particularly from the collar which always fretted him. Here he could live in a world of his own, in quiet and seclusion. Aye, here he was in his true element, in the monastic perspective.

He was always full of interest, telling his brother-monks of his Western experiences, telling them of the glories of the West, of its limitations, of its social customs, of its religious creeds. Or he would talk with them about the ideals of Indian Culture, of the realisations of Indian history, or of the epochs and epoch-making heroes of ancient Rome. Then again, he would hold classes, teaching and preaching unto

them. Or he would go to the chapel and meditate with them before the Master, or take part with them in their physical exercises. Or he would walk in the monastery grounds conversing with himself, as it were, quite unconscious of the fact that he was thinking aloud. On many days he would sing, as he walked joyously and in ecstasy, the words of some soul-stirring song, repeating it in soft tones numberless times. He would continue to sing in such a tense state of mind and heart and yet with such a subdued softness of voice that it seemed that if he rose one note higher, his soul would literally burst with ecstasy. Heedless of the passing hours, he would sing keeping time to the music with the movement of his hand or the manner of his walk. Verily, the monastery would seethe with spiritual power and a divine impulse would be felt, when he was the chief actor and the prime mover.

And when the monks would sit down to meals, the beloved Leader often came. He would offer them some of the dainties which the disciples who were rich would bring for him. He would rejoice at seeing the delicacies brought by the disciples as offerings to the Presence in the chapel. Indeed, each single day the food which the monks ate, was first offered to the Lord. Thus it became holy, and there are stories told of devotees who went as if mad with ecstasy at the thought that the food which they were eating had been partaken of by the Lord Himself. And there was always light-hearted talk at meals and the Swami was always in the lead. Such close communion! Such sweet intimacy! Such radiant happiness and innocence in all the ways of life! Truly, these were all the happy sons of the Master. The austerities they practised, the religious study and meditation in which they passed their days, their conversations with each other, their bearing and purity of character,—all these were imbued with the Spirit of the Great Illumination into which the Man of Dakshineswar had entered, of which their Master-Monk was verily the embodiment, and the nature of which was Absolute Freedom and Immortal Bliss.

## CXXIII

### THE DURGA PUJA AT THE MATH.

Of the many incidents in the last year and a half of the Swami's life, those that occurred at the monastery at Belur were most interesting and important. Here he was in his own true element, surrounded by such as lived with him that which he had chosen as his very own,—the monastic life. And as the days passed and led nearer to that final event of his life, the *Mahasamadhi*, the Swami revealed himself more and more as the monk.

After the Swami returned from his tour in Eastern Bengal and Assam, his illness increased, and for about two months his condition caused great anxiety. He suffered much from a sort of dropsy, which often makes its appearance in cases of acute diabetes, and which affected his whole body. His feet were especially swollen, and he experienced great difficulty in walking. Those who served him say that so tender various portions of his body became that anything but the slightest touch caused him exceeding pain. Sleep almost deserted him in the last year of his life; only for three or four hours at the most did he find any rest broken though it was at almost every hour. But he was always resigned to the Will of the Lord, and in spite of his illness was ever cheerful and ready to receive friends and visitors and talk with them with his characteristic fire and eloquence, though sometimes in a somewhat subdued tone. His disciple, Sarat Chandra, coming to see him once at this time enquired about his health. Swamiji softly replied : "Why ask anymore about health, my boy ? Every day the body is becoming more and more out of order. Being born in Bengal, never is this body free from disease. The physique of this province is not at all good. As soon as you go to work hard, the body breaks down unable to bear the strain. The few days that this body lingers, I shall continue to work for you all, and die in harness."

When pressed to take complete rest for some months he said : "My son, there is no rest for me. That which Sri Ramakrishna called 'Kâli,' took possession of my body and soul three or four days before his passing. *That* makes me work and work, and never lets me keep still or look to my personal comforts." Then, on being asked he related in a few words that great event of his life (See Vol. I., pp 427-429), which would bear repetition here as coming from his own lips.

"Three or four days before the Master's passing," said the Swami, "he called me to his side when alone, and making me sit before him gazed intently into my eyes and entered into Samâdhi. I then actually perceived a powerful current of subtle force like electric shocks entering into me from his body. After a time I too lost all outward consciousness and was merged in Samâdhi. How long I was in that state I do not remember. When I came down to the sense-plane, I found the Master crying. On being asked he said with great tenderness, 'O my Noren ! I have now become a *fakir* by giving away my all and everything to you ! By the force of this *Sakti*, you will do many great things in this world, and only after that you will go back !' It seems to me that it is that *Power* which makes me work and work, whirling me, as it were, into its vortex. This body was not made for sitting idle."

Verily, this wonderful mystic experience is unique in the life-histories of the Saviours of men and their Apostles. Were it not for this Divine Power working in and through the Swami Vivekananda, it would have been impossible to account for the extent of his empire over men's hearts, and its continuing to grow deeper and more resplendent with the onward march of time.

Throughout July and August of the year 1901 Swamiji took as much rest as he could, and as its result, in September he somewhat recuperated. He used to go out in the morning and afternoon for walks along the Grand Trunk Road, dressed in his *gerrua alkhalla* and *Kantope*, or the Sadhus'

cap which comes down over the ears, and having a thick stick in his hand. He would take one or two of his brother-monks with him and talk on serious or merry topics with them on the way. But not unoften he would be so absorbed in thought that he would not speak a word, and would walk so fast as to be far ahead of them. They understood his moods and did not disturb him in any way.

After the establishment of the permanent home of the Order at Belur, the bigoted and orthodox people of the neighbouring villages who were ignorant of their Shastras, used to pass biting criticisms and abuse Swamiji and the monks for their novel ideas, their liberal ways of living and modes of work, and especially for their non-observance of the restrictions of caste, custom and food. They did not even refrain from inventing lies about them and casting malicious aspersions and doubts as regards their purity of character. These unpleasant remarks were often made by them, in the boats plying between Calcutta and Bally, when they found that some one or other of the passengers was going to the Math or coming away from there. These remarks were sometimes repeated to Swamiji by the latter, but he would merely observe : "You know the old proverb, 'The elephant goes through the bazar and hundreds of dogs follow barking after him. The Sadhu is never affected if the world abuse him.' " Or he would say : "It is a law of nature that whensoever new ideas are preached in any country, the adherents of the old path rise against them. Every founder of religion has had to pass this test. Without persecution higher ideas cannot enter into the core of society." Hence he regarded opposition and adverse criticism as actual helps to the spreading of his ideas, and neither did he defend himself or allow any one of his followers or friends to do so. "Go on doing your work disinterestedly and without attachment ; it will sometime but surely bear its fruit," or "The doer of good never meets with disaster", he would say. This criticism of his work, however, wore off even before the passing of the Swami, and the performance of the Durgâ Pujâ in the



Math in strict orthodox style contributed a good deal in doing so.

For it must be remembered that if the Swami preached liberal ideas in social matters, he was at the same time most orthodox in religious matters. In the latter part of the year 1901, he observed all the religious festivals. Several months before the Durga Puja in 1901 which came off in October, he had secured from his disciple, Sarat Chandra, a copy of Raghunandan's 'Twenty-Eight Tattvas,' otherwise called 'Raghunandan's Smriti,' which he wanted to consult as he intended to perform the Durga Puja of that year with the strictest observance of its rites and ceremonies. He finished the reading of the whole book in four or five days. He did not mention his desire to anyone of the Math until ten or twelve days before the festival. About this time a *gurubhāi* of his dreamt that the Ten-armed Mother was coming across the Ganges towards the Math from the direction of Dakshineswar. When on the next day Swamiji spoke of his intention, the *gurubhāi* also disclosed his dream. This settled the question, and Swamiji with Swami Premananda and Brahmachari Krishnalal went on that very day to Calcutta with a view to ask the permission of the Holy Mother to let the *Sankalpa* of the Puja be done in her name, because Sannyāsins are debarred from performing any *Puja* or other Shâstric rites with *Sankalpa*, or the formal declaration by the doer of his desire of gaining some boon, worldly or otherwise, without which no performance of *Karmakanda* is complete. The Holy Mother consented, and Swamiji at once gave orders for an Image to be made, and then returned to the Math. The news spread rapidly all over the city and the householder-disciples gladly joined with the Sannyāsins in making the celebration a success.

On the northern part of the lawn where Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday festival is held, a temporary *mandapa* was constructed for the installation of the Mother and for Her worship.

A beautifully decorated image was brought, a day or two previous to the sixth lunar day, *Shashiti*, and as soon as it reached the Math rain fell in torrents.

Under the able management of the Swami Brahmananda, the Math was full of all sorts of Puja requisites and abundant foodstuffs for feasts. The garden-house of Babu Nilambar Mukherjee near-by, was rented for a month for the accommodation of the Holy Mother who came with several lady-Bhaktas to live there from the day previous to the *Puja*, so that she could be present throughout the days of the festival.

Taking permission of the Holy Mother, Brahmachari Krishnalal took the seat of the *Pujak* or worshipper. Ishwar Chandra Bhattacharya Mahashaya, father of Swami Ramakrishnananda, and a devout Brâhmana well versed in the Tantras and Mantras, became the *Trantradhâraka*, that is to say, one who dictates the *mantrams* to the *pujak* to be repeated and instructs him on the rites. The worship was performed strictly according to Shastric injunctions, the sacrifice of animals being the only item omitted, as that was in opposition to the wishes of the Holy Mother.

To feed the poor sumptuously was the chief function in connection with this *Puja*, and hundreds upon hundreds came throughout the three days of the worship and were lavishly served with *prasad*. Besides, some of the Brâhmanas and Pandits of Belur and Dakshineswar were invited, and they gladly came to attend the worship and join in the feast. Since then many of the orthodox community gave up their former animosity and mistaken notions, and were convinced that these were truly Hindu Sannyâsins.

The festival continued with all the paraphernalia of worship for three days, attended with great éclat. The drummers and the flute-players discoursed sweet and solemn music at intervals, which echoed on the other side of the Ganges. Everyone, high or low, was warmly welcomed and entertained by the Math Brothers with delicacies. Unbroken joy and rejoicings reigned supreme in the monastery during all these days.

On the night of the *Saptami*, the first day of the *Puja* proper, Swamiji had an attack of fever, which prevented him from joining in it on the next morning. But he rose from his bed and slowly came down to attend the *Sandhipuja*, the most important and solemn function of the whole *puja*, and made three offerings of flowers etc., at the feet of the Mother. On the next day, the *Navami* he was well, and at night sang a few of those songs which Sri Ramakrishna used to sing to the Mother on such a day, and roused a wave of religious ecstasy in the hearts of all.

On the *Vijaya Dasami* day, the Image was consigned to the Ganges at night-fall, and the Holy Mother who was highly pleased with the way in which the Puja was celebrated, returned to her residence at Baghbazar after blessing her Sannyâsin sons headed by Swamiji.

The Durga Puja in the Image is *the* national festival of Bengal corresponding to the Christmas of Christian lands. It is the one annual event to which every Hindu looks forward with great joy and rejoicing, as the Mother is believed to come down for three blessed days from Her icy abode in the Mount of Kailas with Her Consort Shiva and Her household of Immortals, to live with Her mortal children and bestow blessings on them. The balmy autumn air, the green fields and meadows with the paddies waving their laden heads, the shining rivers and the bedewed trees,—indeed Nature herself seems to all Hindus as filled with a peculiar charm heralding the coming of the Mother amongst them. Presents are exchanged among friends and relations, boys and girls are given nice dresses, food and clothes are distributed to the poor and to the servants of the household, and hundreds of invitations are issued to friends and acquaintances to join in the Puja. The houses in which the Puja is celebrated are done up, the entrance door is decorated with water-filled earthen jars with cocoanuts at the tops and plantain trees on both sides, and a string of mango leaves over the door post ; and from days previous, songs are sung thrilling with the deepest love and affection for the Mother,

in joyous anticipation of Her coming, or in sending out a welcome to Her. And the beautifully decorated Image of the Mother, with one foot on the lion and the other on the shoulder of the demon of evil, Mahishasura, in his death struggle against Her, and the Mother Herself surrounded by Her celestial sons,—Kartick, the warrior-god, and Ganesh, the giver of success,—and Her daughters,—Lakshmi, the goddess of fortune, and Saraswati, the goddess of learning,—is an actual living Presence to Her devout worshippers. One has to live in a Hindu household where the Puja is celebrated, in order to understand the feelings with which She is looked upon as the destroyer of distress and difficulty, and is treated with all the sweet human relationship of Mother, or as the young daughter Uma. And the *Vijaya Dasami* day in Bengal is the day of universal rejoicings, of exchange of greetings and salutations, of good-will and fellow-feeling, when the high and the low, forgetting their differences of social position and caste, and even enemies forgetting their animosities, clasp each other in warm embrace.

That same year Swamiji also performed the Lakshmi Puja and the Kâli Puja in Images as well, both being celebrated in the monastery in strict accordance with Shastric rites. After the Kâli Puja his own mother sent him word that, when he was a child he was once seriously ill, and that on that occasion she had made a vow that should he recover she would offer special worship to Mâ Kâli and literally make him roll on the ground before Her. She had forgotten her vow all these years, but his recurring illness now recalled to her mind the long-forgotten matter. Though the Swami was ill at that time in November, he went to Kalighat in order to please his mother. He bathed in the Adi-Ganga, and in obedience to his mother's wishes came all the way to the Temple in his wet clothes and rolled thrice on the ground before the Mother Kâli. After offering worship he circumambulated the Temple seven times and then, in the open compound on the Western side of the Natmandir, he performed before the Mother the Homa sacrifice by himself.

To see that *yajna*, the *hold*, or the offerer of oblations, of which was a youthful, shining Sannyâsin of world-wide fame, a big crowd gathered in the Temple. And one recalls that imposing scene describing him thus : "Pouring oblations of *ghee* into the leaping flames of the Sacrificial Fire, Swamiji appeared that day like a second Brahmâ." Returning from Kalighat, Swamiji spoke of the liberal spirit that dominated the temple-priests. Though they knew that he had crossed the *Kâlâpâni*, an act most unorthodox in the eyes of priests, they raised no objection. "On the other hand," he said, "they welcomed me warmly into the Temple and helped me to worship the Mother in every way I pleased."

Thus in the last year of his life Swamiji by himself celebrating the external worship in Images, has shown his sincere devotion and faith in Hindu Gods and Goddesses as Personal aspects of Brahman. So it was with Sankarâchârya. Though as the lion of Vedanta he shook the earth with the roar of the Advaita, he as a devotee composed some of the most soul-stirring hymns of worship to the Hindu Gods and Goddesses. "The Paragon of Vedantists" and the seer of Advaita as the Swami was like his Master, he was also like him no less a devotee of the Mother, of Shiva, of Rama and Krishna. Those who have heard him sing in utter abandonment to any of the above-mentioned forms of the Godhead, will realise the truth of the above statement. As the sun in the evening sky touched by clouds of various shapes displays an infinite variety of fascinating colours, so the illumined soul of Vivekananda, like that of his Divine Master, swayed by different religious feelings, revealed to others a wonderful variety of forms of God-vision. But in that variety they saw the play of the One Infinite only—a state of Realisation so unique as to be beyond the intellectual understanding of man.



## CXXIV

### IN BUDDHA GAYA AND BENARES.

In October of 1901 Swamiji's condition again became serious, and Dr. Saunders, a noted physician of Calcutta, was called in, and he ordered him to abandon even the slightest exertion and give up altogether any intellectual work. Not long after the doctor's visit the Swami was confined to his room by the increasing seriousness of his condition, and for some considerable time he was forced to remain in bed, a fact which distressed him as he was eager to be up and doing. From this time forth the monks cautioned each other and all visitors that came, to abstain from any serious conversation with him ; and if in his talks the Swami drifted to some deep subject they would remind him to refrain therefrom. Even when confined to his room he would enquire after the household works of the monastery to their minutest details and see that they were properly attended to. Whenever he felt better he would busy himself with doing some manual work or other. Sometimes with his own hands he would hoe the grounds of the Math ; sometimes he would himself plant fruit-trees and flowering plants, or sow vegetable seeds, and watch their growth with boyish interest. Or at times he would be found seated crosswise in meditation, or else chanting in deep low tones some *sloka* from the Vedas, or poring over some holy or secular book.

In these days an incident occurred which exhibited the marvellous faith and Yoga power of the Swami. His disciple, the Swami Nirbhayānanda, was suffering from high fever which brought on delirium, and at length all hope of his recovery was abandoned. The fever which afflicted him rose to 107 degrees. The Leader was most anxious. Finally, seized by a sudden intuition, he went to the Thakoor-ghar of the monastery to worship Sri Ramakrishna and after washing the *Kautā* or casket in which are kept the relics of

Sri Ramakrishna, he brought the sacred water and gave the sick monk to drink. The fever, then rising, abated suddenly; and the Swami, turning to his *gurubhāis* and other disciples, said with joyous humility, "Behold the power of Sri Ramakrishna! What wonders can he not work!"

About this time—or was it much later, a few days before his passing?—that he told the Swami Suddhananda that he would tangibly show him the action of the *Ida*, *Pingala* and *Sushumna* nerves in his body, and thus convince him of the reality of these as spoken of in the Yoga Shāstras.

Another spiritual experience which the Swami had, of even a more striking character, and which made a profound impression on all those who came to know of it from him, was the fulfilment of a test in regard to the actual Presence of Sri Ramakrishna in the monastery chapel. It occurred shortly after his return from his last visit to the West, and may be told in this connection. The reliquary of the Master is regarded by his devotees as the Living Presence. The Swami sometimes called it, "*Atmarama's Kauta*." One day doubt entered his mind and he asked himself, "Does Sri Ramakrishna, the Supreme Atman, *really* reside in this casket? I must test it!" Then he prayed, "My Lord, Sri Ramakrishna, if thou art really in that vase, then bring hither within three days the Maharajah of Gwalior who has come to Calcutta for a short visit!" He knew that it was most improbable for the Prince in question to come. He mentioned his prayer to none and indeed, later on, forgot all about it. The next day, returning in the evening from Calcutta whither he had gone for a few hours on some business, he learned from the Math members that the Maharajah of Gwalior was actually prepared to call on him after making preliminary inquiries. He had deputed his brother in an automobile to enquire if the Swami was there. And in case of his not meeting him, he advised his brother to leave word that he had wished very much to meet Swamiji, but as he was leaving Calcutta the next day, he would reserve the pleasure of seeing him for some other occasion. As soon as the Swami heard

this news, he remembered his test and literally ran up the stairs leading to the *Thakurghar*, and entering it touched his head repeatedly at the altar containing the sacred casket in wild devotion. The Swami Premânanda who was at that time meditating there, was bewildered. Then the Swami narrated his test to him and to the assembled monks, and all were awe-struck at this proof of the Presence of the Lord in the chapel, and of His Real Existence.

Such incidents as these surcharged the atmosphere of the Belur Math with the highest spirituality. No wonder that the elder members felt often in the company of the Swami what they had felt in the Dakshineswar Temple-garden of sacred memories.

If the Swami had critics he had also staunch friends and admirers among the most representative of his countrymen. During the session of the Indian National Congress which was held in Calcutta that year in the latter part of December, scores of distinguished delegates from different provinces who came to attend it, availed themselves of this opportunity to visit the monastery and pay their homage to the Swami Vivekananda whom they regarded as the Patriot-Saint of Modern India. He often spoke with them in Hindi instead of English, and invariably made a great impression on them. One day in the course of a conversation with one of the foremost of the Congress leaders on a topic which was dearest to Swamiji's heart, he talked with him in a most passionate and eloquent manner, walking back and forth on the spacious lawn of the monastery for an hour and a half. In speaking of these meetings, the Editor of "The Advocate," of Lucknow, wrote :—

"When we last saw him in Calcutta, during the Congress session, he was eloquently talking, in pure and chaste Hindi, which would do credit to any Upper Indian, about his schemes for the regeneration of India, his face beaming with enthusiasm."

Among the ideas which he discussed with the leaders of the Congress was that of founding a Vedic Institution which should preserve, and train eminent teachers to herald every-



where, the ancient Aryan culture and Sanskritic learning. The delegates were in fervent sympathy with this plan. Recalling their visits to the Swami and particularly referring to the above-mentioned subject, one has written :—

“His last wish and one left unaccomplished was to found a Vedic Institution in Calcutta. A few months before his passing away, during the Christmas Holidays, the sitting of the National Congress was held in Calcutta. Delegates, reformers, professors and great men of various callings from all the different provinces of India, assembled there on that occasion. Many of them came to the Belur Math to pay their respects to Swamiji every afternoon during their stay in the city. Swamiji enlightened them on various subjects, social, political, religious &c. In fact, these meetings formed a Congress in itself, of a type even superior and more beneficial to those present than the actual sessions of the Congress. In one of these afternoons, the proposal was to start a Vedic College in Calcutta, and all present assured him that they would help him in carrying it on in every way that lay in their power. But before the plan was matured Swamiji left the body.”

This desire to found a Vedic College was always with the Swami even unto the very last day of his life, when he spoke to a *gurubhāi* on the need of Vedic study. In order to secure funds for commencing this work on a small scale as soon as possible by opening a Vedic school at the Math under the charge of a qualified Pandit, he instructed the Swami Trigunatita even to dispose of the Udbodhan Press. The money realised was reserved as a fund wherewith to inaugurate his scheme in a public way as soon as his health should allow, but through his demise shortly after, the Institution was made impossible.

Towards the very end of the year two learned and influential men from Japan visited the Math. They had come especially to interview the Swami in order to induce him to appear before a Congress of Religions that was contemplated to be held in Japan in the near future. They said : “If such a distinguished person as you take part in the Congress it will ensure its success. You must come and help us. Japan stands in need of a religious awakening, and we do not know of anyone else who can bring about this

much-desired consummation." The speaker was the Rev. Oda, a celebrated abbot of a Buddhist monastery in Japan, and the Swami, seeing the marked sincerity of him and his companion, Mr. Okakura, became at once enthusiastic and acquiesced in their request. In that hour he reckoned disease as nothing, so long as he might be of help to another large portion of the human race. With them he talked on the glorious life of the Lord Buddha and the philosophical side of His teachings, with such a fervour of devotion and insight that they simply marvelled at his great heart and his all-embracing genius. There was a boy named Hori who had accompanied the elders to India. Mr. Okakura and Hori, made comfortable as the guests of the monastery, loved the Swami dearly, and the latter also would often make himself merry with them, or join the boy in his hobbies in a boyish fashion. Later, the news of the death of Hori while travelling in India, deeply affected the Swami's heart. Mr. Okakura prayed the Swami to accompany him to Buddha Gaya; and as the Swami desired to visit Benares and had then already made arrangements for his stay there at Gopal Lal Villa, he accepted the invitation of his Japanese friend and said to him, "It would give me the greatest pleasure to accompany you to the place where the Tathâgatha attained Nirvâna, and later on to make pilgrimage to Benares where the Buddha first preached His Gospel unto man. Besides, for myself Benares has certain distinctive associations!"

Reflecting on this visit, the Sister Nivedita has written :—

"When the winter again set in, he (the Swami) was so ill as to be confined to bed.

"Yet he made one more journey, lasting through January and February 1902, when he went first to Bodh-Gaya and next to Benares. It was a fit ending to all his wanderings. He arrived at Bodh-Gaya on the morning of his last birthday, and nothing could have exceeded the courtesy and hospitality of the Mahunta. Here, as afterwards at Benares, the confidence and affection of the orthodox world were brought to him in such measure and freedom that he himself stood amazed at the extent of his empire in men's hearts. Bodh-Gaya, as it was now the last, had also been the first, of the holy places he had set

out to visit. And it had been in Benares some few years back, (when he was an unknown monk,) that he had said farewell to one, with the words, 'Till that day when I fall on society like a thunderbolt. I shall visit this place no more !' "

Again, she writes elsewhere :—

"The sixth of January is celebrated in the West as Epiphany. Epiphany, that great festival on which the Christian church commemorates the visit of the Eastern Magi to the cradle of the Infant Christ. It was on this date in the last year of his life, that the Swami himself arrived at Bodh-Gaya."

The Swami's short stay there was the opportunity of numerous people from that city and its vicinity to pay their respects to him. The Mohunta felt rejoiced that he could be of service to so distinguished a fellow-Sannyâsin as the Swami Vivekananda, of whom he had heard repeatedly, and whom he had wanted to know personally from a long time. At Bodh-Gaya, he made excursions to various places of interest and gathered many facts concerning Buddhism, which pleased him immensely. He again meditated beneath the Sacred Bo-Tree, and again his meditation was saturated with the holiest associations and the actual Presence of the Illumined One in the spiritual consciousness.

From Bodh-Gaya the Swami went on to Benares where he hoped that the dry climate would benefit his health. Mr. Okakura also accompanied him there and parted from him after getting his promise that he would let him know definitely and in the near future when he would sail for Japan, should his health allow.

In Benares he was again the centre of attraction for numerous persons. The Mohuntas and orthodox Pandits who came to see him, became great admirers of his personality in spite of his sweeping ideas in the re-statement and reform of Hindu culture, and in spite of the fact that he had crossed the dreaded Kâlâpâni. The Mohunta of the Kedar-eshwara Temple even begged leave to perform *Aratrika* to him. He met here the Maharajah of Bhinga, who begged him to establish a monastery of his Order in the Sacred City,

offering him a certain sum of money for its maintenance for one year and assuring him of his further support. The Swami promised that he would do so, and on his return to Calcutta sent the Swami Shivananda with a disciple to open an Ashrama there. Many times he went on an afternoon trip on the Sacred River, and on a few occasions when his health permitted, he bathed in its sacramental waters, and then, as a common pilgrim, visited the Holy Temples, particularly that of Vishvanath. He kept in touch also with affairs in Calcutta and his other Indian centres. And his voluminous mail was forwarded to him from the head institution at Belur. Many of these letters were from the West, others from his Indian friends and disciples asking him various learned questions on spiritual, social or historic subjects. His replies to such letters were always highly satisfactory to his correspondents. One of his replies, indicative of many others, conveys the spirit of a true historian and archæologist and shows that he was bestowing much thought at the time on Buddhism. It reads :

"My dear Swarupananda,

"\* \* \*In answer to C—'s letter, tell him to study the Brahma-Sutras himself. What does he mean by the Brahma-Sutras containing references to Buddhism? He means the *Bhāṣhyas*, of course, or rather ought to mean, and Sankara was only the last *Bhāṣhyakāra*. There are references though in Buddhistic literature to Vedānta, and the Mahayana school of Buddhism is even non-Advaitistic. Why does Amara Singha, a Buddhist, give as one of the names of Buddha '*Advayaavadi*' ? C—writes, the word Brahman does not occur in the Upanishads ! *Quel betise !*

"I hold the Mahayana to be the older of the two schools of Buddhism.

"The theory of Mâyâ is as old as the Rik Samhita. The Svetasvatara Upanishad contains the word 'Maya' which is developed out of *Prakṛiti*. I hold that Upanishad to be at least older than Buddhism.

"I have had much light of late about Buddhism, and I am ready to prove—(1) that Shiva-worship, in various forms, antedated the Buddhists, that the Buddhists tried to get hold of the sacred places of the Shaivas, but failing in that, made new places in the precincts, just as you find now at Bodh-Gaya and Sarnath (Benares).

"(2) The story in the Agni Purana about Gayâsura does not refer

to Buddha at all—as Dr. Rajendralala will have it, but simply to a pre-existing story.

“(3) That Buddha went to live on Gayâsirsha mountain proves the pre-existence of that place.

“(4) Gaya was a place of ancestor-worship before the time of Buddha, and the footprint-worship the Buddhists copied from the Hindus.

“(5) About Benares, even the oldest records go to prove it as the great place of Shiva-worship ; &c., &c.

“Many are the new facts I have gathered in Bodh-Gaya and from Buddhist literature. Tell C—to read for himself, and not be swayed by foolish opinions.

“A total revolution has occurred in my mind about the relation of Buddhism and Neo-Hinduism. I may not live to work out the glimpses, but I shall leave the lines of work indicated, and you and your brethren will have to work it out.

“I am rather well here, in Benares, and if I go on improving in this way it will be a great gain.”

This letter is thus most important, giving as it does an understanding of what the Swami's thoughts were at this time, and of his exhaustless energy of mind. And also, what proved of great joy to his disciples, was the information that he was much improving in health. This letter possesses the same old raciness and strength of conviction which mark all his epistles.

Under the inspiration of the Swami's teachings, several young men of Bengal had formed themselves into a band to be of service to the suffering thousands of pilgrims in Benares. They had rented a small house and wheresoever their eyes fell on destitute pilgrims and helpless widows and aged persons lying ill in the streets and *Ghats* of the city, they tried with their limited means to provide proper food and shelter and medical aid for them. They worked with a zeal and devotion actuated by a spirit of self-sacrifice, which recalled the days of St. Francis of Assisi. The Swami was delighted with the work they were doing and was proud of them. “You have the true spirit, my boys,” he said, “and always have my love and blessings ! Go on bravely ; never mind your poverty ; money *will* come ; a great thing will grow out of it surpassing your fondest

hopes!" For their sake he wrote an Appeal which was to accompany the First Report of "The Ramakrishna Home of Service" as the new institution was called. The Appeal (See "Complete Works", page 1208) is alive with true human sympathy and with great eloquence and spiritual fervour.

The Swami's stay in Benares was a most pleasant experience. The dry climate relieved him of any serious asthmatic attack; and amidst temples and Sadhus and all the orthodoxy of the immemorially sacred city he felt himself as he really was,—dwelling not in the physical plane, but in that of the Spirit. In his letters to Western disciples from this place he speaks with touching idealism of its shrines, its *ghats* and its holiness. And those to whom these letters were communicated, and those to whom in turn the news was told, were exceedingly gratified to know further that their beloved Master was somewhat himself again.

Might it be that Benares had been the city of the prophecy of Sri Ramakrishna who had seen the Light come through the skies from the north-westerly direction and plunge into the Simla side of the city of Calcutta, and knew that "Now my man is born!" Here in Benares also had been the fasts and austerities of that aged aunt who had diligently worshipped at the Vishvanath and Vireswar temples so that her sister, the Swami's mother, might be blessed with a son. And it had been the Lord of Kashi, Shiva Himself, Whom the Swami's mother, in her mystic dream, had seen conveying the glad tidings unto her soul that He Himself would enter a human body as her son. No wonder then, that whensoever in Benares, the Swami was himself!

## CXXV.

### THE AWAKENER OF SOULS.

At times when the Swami found his body getting more and more incapable of further work, and a sufficient number of workers not coming forward to take up his work he used to feel despondent. His hopes were centred in a band of intelligent young men of character who would renounce everything for the welfare of others, and who would lay down their lives in working out his ideas for the good of their own selves and of their country. He used to say that if he got ten or twelve youths fired with a faith like that of Nachiketa, he could turn the whole current of thought and aspiration of his country into a new channel. True, he had his *gurubhāis* and his Sannyasin disciples who were ready to do anything for him. But they were only a handful, and were not as yet able to manifest the highest possibilities of their soul in the field of action, in the way that he wanted them to do. Still, looking at them he was hopeful, for he believed that, if the Lord willed, out of them and others would come religious heroes and gigantic workers who would in the future carry out his plans and ideas with an irresistible power and energy. And he was not unaware of the fact that the influence of his preaching of the Vedānta in the West, his new ideas and interpretations of Hindu ideals and culture, and his spirit of Service and of patriotism, were penetrating into the core of society everywhere, and, especially in his own country, tending the thought-currents of the nation to flow with a fresh vitality and power.

Speaking one of these days to Sarat Chandra on the above subject and on the ideals and means that were imperatively necessary to be taken up in India at the present day, he suddenly warmed up and exclaimed :—

“Keeping the national ideal of renunciation which comes

out of devotion to the Lord before your eyes, you have to work fearlessly with the strength of a lion, heedless of the fruits of action and careless of criticism. Let Mahavira be your ideal. See, how with unbounded faith in the name of Rama he crossed the ocean at a bound, defying life and death,—the prince of the self-controlled ones, wise and sagacious ! You have to mould your lives on that high ideal,—thinking yourselves as the servants of God. When you become firmly established in that, ideas and means will evolve of themselves. Carrying out the commands of the Guru without a shadow of doubt or hesitation, and observing strict *Brahmacharyam*—that is the secret of success in religious life ; there is no other path to follow. Look at Hanuman, the ideal servant of the Lord. As on the one hand, with the force and might of his arms he could send a thrill of terror into the legions of Ravana's demons, so on the other hand, his spirit of service to his Lord, Rama, was unique. He was ever ready to lay down his life for Him, indifferent to everything else except serving Rama and obeying His commands,—indifferent even to the attainment of the status of Brahmâ or Shiva ! One-pointed devotion like that is what is needed. But what are you doing ? A nation of dyspeptics indulging in antics to the accompaniment of *Khôl* and *Karatal* and singing *kirtans* and other songs of a sentimental type ! In trying to imitate, with all your lower passions and propensities fully awake, that highest and most difficult mode of *Sâdhanâ* the *Madhûr Bhava*, the path of the Gopis of Brindavan, in which there is not the slightest touch of lust, the country is sinking into the depths of dark *tamas* ! Is it any wonder that hearing day and night from boyhood those soft and sentimental songs and music, the nation is becoming more and more effeminate ? What degradation can be more complete ? Where are your *dhhâk*, *dhhole*, *turi*, *bheri* and *singâ*, your drums, kettle-drums, tom-toms, trumpets and horns gone ? Can you not get them anymore in the country ? Let the children and young men hear their deep, solemn, austere and rousing notes. We have to



sound the *damaru* and the horn ; we must produce on drums symphonies that are martial and heroic like that of *Brahmarudra Tāl* ; we must shake the earth and sky with wild shouts of 'Mahavira ! Mahavira !' and 'Hara ! Hara ! Vyom ! Vyom !' We must stop for the present those songs and music which stimulate the softer feelings in men and, instead, make them hear and cultivate those in *dhrupad* and the like. We must revivify the country through the thundering notes of the Vedic rhythm. In all our spheres of activity we should display the austere loftiness of spirit which heroism breathes. In following such an ideal of manliness alone is there the welfare of the Motherland. If you for one can mould your character in the light of such an ideal, hundreds of people will like to do the same by following your example. But, mind you, never for a moment swerve an inch from the path of righteousness. Never let weakness overcome you. In all your actions in daily life, always manifest moral courage. Thus and thus alone will the blessings of the Divine Mother descend upon you."

On the disciple telling him that at times he felt weak and faint-hearted, Swamiji resumed :—

"At those times you should bring in such thoughts as, 'Am I not the son of *him* ? Being his follower how can I stoop so low and be wanting in courage ! Knocking down all debasing thoughts and weakness, stand up like a hero saying, 'I am possessed of infinite strength, I am possessed of purified intellect, I am possessed of supreme wisdom, I am the blissful Brahman !' Always keep up your pride upon the thought, 'I am the disciple of So-and-so ; I am the companion of the companions of Sri Ramakrishna—the conqueror of Lust and Gold !' Brahman never wakes up in one who has not such self-esteem. Haven't you heard that song of Ramprasad in which he says, 'Whom do I fear in this world,—I who have the Mother of the Universe as my Sovereign ?' Keep such a spirit awake in your mind, take the name of Mahavira, take refuge in Mahāmâyâ, see Brahman in everything,—and then no more will

weakness, cowardice and low spirits dare to approach you !”

Speaking in this strain Swamiji came downstairs, and sat facing the west, on the canvas cot under the mango tree in the courtyard, as he often used to do. His eyes were luminous with a great mood. His whole frame seemed stirred up with a strange spiritual consciousness. Pointing to the Sannyâsins and Brahmachârins who were about him there, he exclaimed to the disciple, “And where shall you go to seek Brahman? He is immanent in all beings. *Here, here* is the visible Brahman! Shame to those who neglecting the visible Brahman set their minds on other things! Here is the Brahman before you as tangible as a fruit in one’s hand! Can’t you see! Here—here—here is this Brahman!” He spoke these words in such an inspiring way that they felt a thrill in their souls and a strange perception of Reality. Over all came the Peace and Insight of deep meditation. Their figures in those tense moments seemed as though carved of marble, so motionless and hushed in silence had they become! Swami Premananda was then returning from his bath in the Ganges with a *kamandalu* of the sacred water in his hand, and was on his way to the worship of Sri Ramakrishna in the chapel. Seeing him, the Swami exclaimed, “Here—here is the visible Brahman! Here is the visible Brahman!” Hearing these words his *gurubhâi* stopped suddenly and was rooted to the spot, as it were, like one bound by a spell. He too fell into deep meditation inebriated with God-consciousness. About a quarter of an hour passed in this way, and then Swamiji addressing his *gurubhâi* said, “Now go to your worship.” Then only, Swami Premananda, and gradually all others, returned to the sense-plane, to the world of individual ego and egoism.

That scene was unforgettable. Everyone in the monastery was struck with amazement at seeing the wonderful power of their beloved leader. In a moment, with but one word, he drowned the minds of all, as it were, in the depths of

supreme insight. This incident recalls to the mind a somewhat similar one in the life of the Swami's Divine Master, when on a certain day, a few weeks before his leaving the body, he came out into the garden at Cossipur and in the semi-conscious state of Samadhi placed his hand on the heads or at the hearts, as the case might be, of a number of householder-disciples and visitors who happened to be there, saying, "*Chaitanya houk!*" "Be awakened!" and the favoured ones felt an over-welling Bliss sending them into ecstasies and having God-visions!

The Swami speaking of the present incident said to the disciple some time later, "Did you see what happened to-day? They were all immersed in meditation! They are all Sri Ramakrishna's sons! As soon as told, the Brahman woke up within them!" On the disciple telling him that he had also felt like that, but it had now passed away, he said, "My boy, this will come to you in time of itself. But first you must work—work for the good of others—work to raise the veil from eyes blinded by *Mâyâ*!"

In these days, about the latter part of the year 1901, to fill up the Math grounds and clear the lands, a number of Santals came regularly. The Swami would be quite free in his manners with them and make them merry by his talk. Sometimes he would make enquiries and hear their tales of weal and woe. He loved them and their guileless ways very much. It was a relaxation for him from his work and tense states of mind to talk with these simple folk. One day some gentlemen of wealth and position came to see him. At the time he was talking with these poor labourers, smoking from a common *hookah*. When the news was brought to him he said, 'what do I care for your So-and-so. I am quite happy with these people!' In fact, he did not leave his favourite Santals to go and see the visitors.

The Swami was especially fond of one of these Santals, Keshta by name, and this man used to tell him, "O Swami Baba, don't you come to us when we are working, for we cannot work while we talk with you, and Burobaba takes us to

task for not doing the full measure of work!" Hearing these words Swamiji used to be visibly affected, and assured them that the Swami Advaitananda would not say anything to them. Sometimes listening to their wants and miseries he burst into tears, and Keshta would say to him, "Now you must go, Swami Baba! We won't tell you anymore of our troubles, for it makes you weep!"

One day the Swami asked Keshta: "Will you all like to have a feast here?" The man replied, "Dear father, if we eat food cooked by you with salt we shall lose caste, for we are now married!" On the Swami insisting and finally saying that salt would not be mixed in the cooking but served to them separately, Keshta agreed. On the occasion of the feast the menu included, *loochis*, curry, sweets, curds and a number of other delicacies. The Swami himself supervised the arrangements and the serving of food to his guests, who exclaimed from time to time, "O Swami father, from where have you got such fine things! We have never tasted such in our life!" The Swami after feeding them to their heart's content told them: "You are Narayanas; to-day I have entertained Narayana Himself by feeding you!" Later, speaking to a disciple he remarked, "I actually saw Narayana Himself in them! How simple-hearted and guileless they are! They love me sincerely!" Shortly after, addressing the Sannyâsins and the Brahmachârins of the Math he said:

"See how simple-hearted these poor illiterate people are! Will you be able to relieve their miseries, to some extent at least? Otherwise of what use is our wearing the *gerrua*? Giving away one's self and all for the good of others—this is true Sannyasa. Sometimes I think within myself, 'What is the good of building monasteries and so forth! Why not sell them and distribute the money among the poor, indigent Narayanas. What homes should we care for, we who have made the tree our shelter? Alas! How can we have the heart to put a morsel to our mouths, when our countrymen have not enough wherewith to feed or clothe themselves!' While I was in the West, time after time I prayed to the Divine Mother

Saying, 'O Mother, here Thy sons are lying on beds of roses, are eating and drinking the rarest delicacies to their heart's content, and are enjoying their life to the full,—while those in our country are starving of hunger. Mother, shall there be no redress for them?' One of the purposes of my going out to preach religion to the West, as you know, was to see if I could find any means of providing for the people of my country. Seeing their poverty and distress I think sometimes, 'Let us throw away all this paraphernalia of worship—blowing the conch and ringing the bell and waving the lights before the Image, and so forth, Let us throw away all pride of learning and study of the Shastras and all Sadhanas for the attainment of personal Mukti,—and going from village to village devote our lives to the service of the poor, and by convincing the rich men about their duties to the masses, through the force of our character and spirituality and our austere living, get money and the means wherewith to serve the poor and the distressed.' Alas! Nobody in our country thinks for the low, the poor and the miserable! Those that are the backbone of the nation, whose labour produces food, those whose one day's strike from work raises a cry of general distress in the city—where is the man in our country who sympathises with them, who shares in their joys and sorrows! Look, how for want of sympathy on the part of the Hindus, thousands of Pariahs are becoming Christians in the Madras Presidency! Don't think that it is merely the pinch of hunger that drives them to embrace Christianity. It is simply because they do not get your sympathy. You are continually telling them, 'Don't touch me!' 'Don't touch this or that!' Is there any fellow-feeling or sense of Dharma left in the country? There is only 'Don't-touchism' now! Kick out all such degrading usages! How I wish to demolish the barriers of 'Don't-touchism' and go out and bring together one and all, crying, 'Come, all ye that are poor and destitute, fallen and downtrodden! We are one in the name of Ramakrishna!' Unless they are elevated, the Great Mother will never awake! What are we good

for if we cannot provide facilities for their food and clothing ! Alas ! They are ignorant of the ways of the world, and hence fail to eke out a living, though labouring hard day and night for it. Gather all your forces together to remove the veil from their eyes. What I see clear as daylight is, that the same Brahman, the same Sakti *is* in them as in me ! Only, there is a difference in the degree of manifestation—that is all. Have you ever seen a country, in the whole history of the world, rise unless there was a uniform circulation of the national blood all over its body ? Know this for certain, that no great work can be done by that body one limb of which is paralysed, in spite of the rest of its members remaining strong and healthy."

A lay-disciple now said to the Swami, "It is too difficult a task, Sir, to establish harmony and co-operation among all the varying religious sects and creeds that are current in this country, and make them act in unison for a common purpose." Vexed at hearing these words, Swamiji cried out in an excited voice :—

"Don't come here anymore if you think any task too difficult. Through the Grace of the Lord, everything becomes easy of achievement. Your duty is to serve the poor and the distressed, without distinction of caste and creed. What business have you to think of the fruits of your action ? Your duty is to go on working and everything will set itself right in time and work by itself. My method of work is to construct, and not to destroy that which is already existing. Read the histories of the world and you will see that invariably, at some particular epoch, a certain great man arose in some country and stood as the centre of its national life-goal. Influenced by his ideas hundreds and thousands of people devoted their lives to the good of the world. You are all intelligent boys, and profess to be my disciples,—tell me *what* you have done. Couldn't you give away one life for the sake of others ? Let the reading of the Vedanta and the practising of meditation and the like be left to be done in the

next life! Let this body go in the service of others,—and then I shall know, you have not come to me in vain!”

Later on, he said: “After so much *Tapasyā* I have known that the highest truth is this: ‘*He* is present in every being! These are all—the manifold forms of Him. There is no other God to seek for! He alone is worshipping God, who serves all beings!’”

“Keep firm-fixed in your mind all that I have spoken to you to-day, and act on it. May Sri Ramakrishna be your help and guide! May His spirit abide with you all!”

The two above-mentioned incidents were typical of the many noteworthy occasions when Swamiji, in spite of his illness and sufferings, rose to heights of amazing power, feeling and eloquence in giving his message to his disciples and fellow-countrymen, in the enforced seclusion of his monastery. No wonder that the strain would bring upon him a reaction, in the shape of a sinking sensation or palpitation of the heart, as it did in the present instance. But who could check that mighty flame within him, which must burst out in setting the souls of others on fire, or it would consume his whole being! His gurubhâis knowing this well, were at a loss as to what to do with him, and resigned themselves to the will of the Lord, praying for his speedy recovery.



## CXXVI

### THE RAMAKRISHNA FESTIVAL AND OTHER DAYS.

On the occasion of the Birthday Festival of Sri Ramakrishna, shortly after his return from Benares, the Swami was unable to leave his room. In fact, for some days previous he had been confined to his bed. His feet had swollen and he had been almost unable to walk. A gloom was cast over the Celebration by the announcement that his malady had taken a serious turn. The disappointment of the thousands who had come on this festive occasion was great, for they had anticipated the pleasure of seeing him and hearing his words ; and for their sake the Swami thought several times in the morning of appearing in public. But he soon found that even the few visitors who came to him in the early part of the day tired him. So he decided to rest entirely and ordered the Swami Niranjanananda to keep guard and permit none to enter his room. The *gurubhāi* did as he was bidden. Only one lay-disciple attended on the Swami. He had brought with him a hymn written in honour of Sri Ramakrishna with which the Swami was much pleased. Seeing the Swami's state of health, the disciple was deeply affected and almost burst into tears. Swamiji understanding his feelings said : "What is the use of giving way to sorrow, my boy? This body was born and it will die. If I have been able to instil into you all, even to a small degree, some of my ideas, then I shall know that I have not lived my life in vain ! Always remember, Renunciation is the root *mantram*. Without being initiated in that *mantram*, even Brahmā and the gods cannot attain *Mukti* ! Renunciation only comes when all desires, the result of *Samskaras* of past lives, are exhausted."

Saying thus he became deeply absorbed in thought.



After a while he observed that it would be better if the Festival were celebrated in four or five days instead of one, by devoting the first day to the reading of the Shastras with annotations; the second day to the discussion on the Vedas and the Vedanta and other philosophies; the third day to question-classes; the fourth day to the delivery of lectures on the life and mission of Sri Ramakrishna; and so forth; and the Festival night be concluded on the next day by celebrating it with *sankirtan*, worship, feeding of thousands of the poor and distribution of *prasāda* to the assembled guests, as is done at present. More of such spiritual food as would appeal to the intellect of the learned and more of the Master's life-giving ideas should be imparted. Not only this Mahotsav was to be his memorial, but the central union of an intense propaganda of his doctrines. Otherwise mere singing and dancing and a momentary religious excitement, he remarked, were of not much value.

When a number of Sankirtan parties arrived he stood up in front of the window on the southern side, by supporting himself against its iron bars, and looked benignly on the assembled thousands. Within a few minutes he again sat down, feeling as if he could not sustain the weight of his own body. He then spoke to the disciple on the Realisation of the Self which comes out of devotion to the Lord who is born as a world-teacher from time to time. He also talked on the glory of the Avatars, or Incarnations of God, who alone can give *Mukti* to souls even in one life by dispelling the darkness of millions of past lives. He gave a beautiful explanation of what is meant by 'the mercy of the Great Ones'. When a man realises the Highest Self, he said, he becomes the centre of a great spiritual force, and those who come within the circumference of the circle whose centre is the illumined one, are saturated with his ideas and teachings and inspired with his spirit. Thus they become possessed of the highest spirituality without undergoing austere religious practices. He affirmed that an Incarnation of God appears in His earthly form before His devotees who

take refuge in Him, as distinctly as one sees another, and bestows His mercy on them. He related the story of Sri Ramakrishna appearing before him with a sorrowful countenance for twenty-one days night after night at Ghazipur, when he contemplated taking initiation from Pavhari Baba in the practices of *Hathayoga* in order to regain his broken health. At the time he had been suffering from Lumbago which made him unfit for practising *Sadhana* as much as he desired. So he had thought within himself that, as his own *guru* did not teach him any means of making his body immune to diseases, he might learn it from the Saint of Ghazipur, who was an adept in it. But the above vision repeatedly seen, made him ashamed of himself, realising how foolish it was to think of the body instead of the Self, and to doubt his own Master to whom he was indebted for everything.

"Blessed are those," he continued, "who have been favoured with the company of Sri Ramakrishna! Those who come after, will also see Him if they call upon Him and follow His teachings with their whole heart and soul. No one has yet understood that Personality who was known as 'Ramakrishna.' Even those sons of his, His *antarangas* and *Sāṅgopāṅgas* (meaning, his own *gurubhāis*), who lived under His shadow for years and saw with their own eyes His wonderful manifestation of power and real essence,—even they have not been able to fathom the depth of His true nature! A few may have only an inkling of it, and they also sometimes get confused! What to speak of others? In time, however, they will come to know."

When the talk was going on, the Swami Niranjanananda knocked at the door to communicate the news that the Sister Nivedita and several Western ladies were waiting to know if they might see the Swami. On Swamiji asking him to admit them the Sister Nivedita, who had recently returned from her visit to Europe and America, entered his room with her companions. They noticed that he was very ill, and so after exchanging a few words with him they departed, Swamiji

then remarked to the disciple, "Did you see, how considerate they are! If it were a Bengali, he would have made me talk at least for half an hour, even seeing me ill."

At about half past two when the Festival was at its height, Swamiji guessing the disciple's desire aright let him go and join in the festivities for a while. On his returning he asked him, "How many people, do you think, are there?" "Fifty-thousand!" replied the disciple. Hearing this, Swamiji stood up, and making a survey of the huge gathering said, "What do you say! Thirty-thousand at the most!" He spoke of the rapid spread of Sri Thakur's worship and alluded to the fact that in many parts of the world the festival of the Master's Birthday was being commemorated. Towards evening, when the concourse of people had dispersed, all the windows and doors of the Swami's room were thrown open, and he felt better for the cool evening air.

Throughout his life a period of strict *tapasyā* or austerities, or even the fulfilment of a vow was always a delight to the Swami, and he would constantly insist upon his disciples practising it as an excellent means of training the will. The satisfaction that comes of the feeling that one is the master of his own self and can stand bravely against the odds of life which constantly try to drag one down, is a sufficient incentive for its practice even for a short time, if not always, till one ascends the heights of realisation. He was strict on all religious observances which entailed some degree of self-denial, and whensoever he found the slightest laxity in these respects, he was wont to point out the failing in uncompromising terms. Thus, on the Shivaratri Day, just preceding the Birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna in 1898, he went to the refectory after the bell had rung for the midday meal and saw everyone partaking of it. Swami Suddhananda who came a little later, was going to take his seat when Swamiji gravely asked him if fasting suited him. The disciple replying that it did fairly well, he bade him observe the fast and vows for the day and perform the night-long worship of Shiva. The disciple gladly agreed to obey the injunction of his Master.

However, knowing him to be of delicate health the Swami permitted him to take some fruit, if he found it too trying to go without anything. Then he addressed the others saying sharply, that he was ashamed to see that no one in the monastery had fasted, and ordained that thenceforth they should observe the Day in the proper religious spirit.

As for the Swami himself, the shining forth of his soul in spite of the trammels of disease, and his faithful performance of the severe medical orders that were imposed upon him, were of themselves sufficient proof of his extraordinary power of will and soaring spirituality.

On and off in the last year and a half of his life the Swami was under strict medical orders. When he returned from Benares to be present at the festival of Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday anniversary at the Belur Math, and hoping to take up again his work of personal training and teaching, his health suffered a serious relapse. His *gurubhādis* became so nervous over his condition that, at the earnest entreaty of the Swami Niranjanananda in which all his other *gurubhādis* joined, he agreed to place himself under the treatment of an Ayurvedic practitioner, the well-known Kaviraj Mahananda Sen Gupta of Calcutta. Under this treatment the medical orders were most rigorous, one of them being that he should not drink a single drop of water and should eschew salt altogether. This order the Swami determined to fulfil faithfully ; first, because he loved to feel the response of the body to the will, to realise his own command over it ; secondly, because he felt that he must abide by the wishes of his *gurubhādis* ; and lastly, for the sake of the work that was constantly opening before him, he thought it worth while to give a trial to this course of treatment to regain his health. To all such as expressed sympathy for him in his difficult position, he gave the above reasons for his undergoing the Kaviraji treatment, though he was not himself very hopeful of its efficacy in his case. To one he said in loving humility, "You see, I am simply obeying the orders of my *gurubhādis* ; I could not throw away their request ; they love me so dearly !" To another who asked

him, "Swamiji, how is it that in spite of the severe heat of the summer you can refrain from water, when you were in the habit of drinking it hourly throughout the day?"—he replied, "What do you say! When I decided to begin the treatment, I imposed this vow upon myself, and now the water would not go down the throat. For twenty one days I have already refrained from water, and now in rinsing out my mouth I find that the muscles of my throat close of their own accord against the passage of a single drop, and I cannot drink it even if I would. The body instructed by the mind rebels. The body is only a mask of the mind. What the mind dictates the body *will have* to obey." After a few days of Ayurvedic treatment he was able to say to his *gurubhais*, "Now I do not even *think* of water. I do not miss it at all!" He was overjoyed to find that in spite of physical weakness and broken health, his strength of will remained unabated, and once he observed with a consciousness of triumph, "I see I can do *anything*!" After the use of Kaviraji medicines for more than two months he felt greatly benefited in health.

In following the hard restrictions of the above treatment, Swamiji had also to live upon a very spare diet. Besides, sleep had almost forsaken him for a long time. But, notwithstanding all this, the natural glow of his countenance and the lustre of his eyes were undiminished, and he knew no respite from his labours. Shortly before the above treatment he had begun reading the newly-published edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica, which had been added to the Math library through the generosity of a Western disciple. His disciple, Sarat Chandra Chakravarti, paying a visit to him, saw those twenty-five large volumes and remarked, "It is difficult to master the contents of so many volumes in one life." He did not know that Swamiji had already finished ten volumes and was at the time reading the eleventh. "What do you mean?" he said. "Ask me whatever you like from these ten volumes and I can tell you all about it." The disciple, out of curiosity, brought down the books and asked him many questions from difficult subjects,

selecting one or two from each volume. Strange to say—not only did Swamiji give the purport of those matters displaying a vast amount of even technical knowledge contained therein, but in many instances quoted *verbatim* even the language of the books! The disciple was astounded at the extraordinary intelligence and memory of his Guru, and setting aside the books exclaimed, “This is beyond the power of man!” The Swami then told him that there was nothing miraculous about the matter, and that if one could observe the strictest *Brahmacharyam* only, one could retain and reproduce exactly what one heard or read even once, and even years ago. “For the lack of this *Brahmacharyam*,” he added, “we as a nation are becoming poorer and poorer in strength and intellect and losing our manhood.”

After a while Swamiji went on explaining to the disciple in the most lucid and convincing way the arguments advanced and conclusions arrived at by the different systems of Hindu philosophy. When the talk was going on, the Swami Brahmananda came in and said to the disciple, “How inconsiderate you are! Swamiji is unwell, and you, instead of humouring him with light talk, as I told you to do, are tiring him out by making him speak on these abstruse subjects!” The disciple was abashed. But Swamiji addressing his *gurubhai* said, “Who cares for your medical restrictions and all that stuff! They are my sons; if in giving them instruction my body wears out, who cares a straw for that!”

The conversation afterwards turned on the topic of the authors of Bengali literature. Swamiji was very severe on Bharat Chandra, one of the older Bengali poets, and praised Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Meghnadbadh Kavya* as the greatest work of poetic genius in the Bengali literature, adding that it was difficult to find another epic poem in the whole of Europe in modern times to match with it. “And do you know,” he said in conclusion, “what portion of it I regard as the greatest creation of the poet?—That in which Indrajit

has been slain in battle, and Mandodari, the wife of the King Ravana, stricken with sorrow at the loss of her valiant son, is imploring her husband to desist from battle; but Ravana, like a great hero that he is, casting off from his heart all grief for his dead son, and without caring for the fate of his queen and other sons, is ready to go out for battle, burning with pride, anger and revenge! 'Let whatever come as it may, let the universe remain or be broken up into fragments, I will not forget my duty!'—these are the words of a mighty hero!" Then he asked the disciple to fetch the book from the Math library and read out the above portion from it in a thrilling manner, transmitting in the utterance of each word the spirit of heroism and of wounded pride that it breathes.

Another morning, in talking with the same disciple, he raised the topic of establishing his much-desired Math for women somewhere near Calcutta, on the banks of the Ganges, on the same lines as those of the present monastery, with the Holy Mother as its central figure and guiding spirit, so that *Brahmacharinis* and lady-teachers would be trained there to work for the regeneration of their sex in India. In a long talk full of enthusiasm and insight, he spoke in detail of his ideas about the nunnery, the means and methods of its action, the urgent need of starting centres all over the country for the education of Indian women on national lines, the great results that would come out of such work in time, and so on, and cleared the doubts of the disciple on subjects appertaining to it.

When the bell for dinner rang, the disciple with folded palms begged for Swamiji's blessings, and he putting his hand on his head said, "There is no fear for you. You are not of this world—neither householder nor Sannyâsin!—This is a new fashion!"



## CXXVII.

### THE DAYS OF DISCIPLINE AND MEDITATION.

All through the serious periods of his illness in 1901 and 1902 and even up to the very end, the Swami was eager to receive friends and visitors and instruct his disciples, notwithstanding the plea of his *gurubhādis* to take perfect rest for the sake of his health, for in the matter of teaching, he knew no limits. Everything must be sacrificed, even the body itself. And sometimes, hearing the plight of earnest seekers, who were not permitted in his presence through the intervention of his brother-monks, his pity would be great, and he would say to the latter: "See here! What good is this body! Let it go in helping others! Did not our Thakur preach unto the very end? And shall I not do the same? I do not care a straw if the body goes! You cannot imagine how happy I feel when I get earnest seekers after truth to talk to. In the work of waking up the Atman in my fellow-men I shall gladly die again and again!"

¶ All through the period under description, and especially from the early part of March 1902 until the time when he passed away, in spite of his physical afflictions, the Swami was busy in many ways. Disease counted as nothing when his mind was set upon doing something. Even unto the last day he himself conducted numerous Vedic and question classes at the monastery, and oftentimes the *Brahmacharins* and even his own *gurubhādis* came to him for spiritual advice. He often spoke of meditation-methods and would train such as were backward in this spiritual science. He spent hours in answering correspondence, or in reading, or in noting down his thoughts for writing some book on Hindu philosophy or on Indian history; and then for recreation he would sing some song or discourse with his *gurubhādis*, giving himself up to fun and merriment. Oftentimes, again, in the midst of his talks his



face would wear a dreamy far-away look, and then all would leave him, knowing that he wanted to be left alone with his thoughts.

Even to the very end the Swami was training his workers ; and above all he endeavoured to bring about the spirit of self-confidence, initiative and responsibility in their work. For example, he once reproved the managing staff of one of his magazines for bothering him with details, though with regard to important matters in which they were inexperienced, he demanded that they should seek his advice. The specific incident just referred to, was about deciding the matter of the publication in his magazine of the Gita with the Bengali translation of Sankaracharya's *Bhāṣya* on it by Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Pramatha Nath Tarkabhushan, or that by his disciple, Sarat Chandra, for both had sent to the editor their manuscripts on the same book simultaneously. Seeing two workers concerned with the periodical approaching him with both the manuscripts to ask for his decision, the Swami said, knowing their thoughts intuitively, as it were, "Look to these fellows ! They come to me for opinions on the most trifling matters and bother me with them. Why can't they manage the work on their own account, using discretion like the Sister Nivedita ! Look at her ! How nicely she is doing the work without bothering me in the least !" Later on, however, looking through the manuscripts he remarked that our Pandits did not know how to make literal translation of Sanskrit stanzas. And without giving any definite opinion as to the respective merits of the two translations, he said to those who had come to him for advice, to decide for themselves about the matter in question. When Swamiji's remarks were told to Pandit Pramatha Nath, such was his good nature that instead of feeling offended, he asked his manuscripts to be returned and gladly took the trouble of re-writing the whole thing carefully. It was then chosen for publication in the paper.

After knowing Swamiji's attitude from the above incident, the managing staff of the journal resolved to do as desired

by him and did not come to him for counsel for a long time, and only in one case of emergency sought his advice by a letter. He became annoyed at this and wrote a letter telling them to come and take instructions from him direct, as it was an important and confidential matter. When one of them came he expressed his displeasure at their not asking him anything about the paper! Indeed, the Swami was most scrupulous in guarding the prestige of his own papers and in watching that they might not deviate from the lines and principles laid down by him. On one occasion he was wroth at seeing an article full of narrow sectarianism appear in one of his magazines, from the pen of a well-known holy man. At another time he was furious to find therein a very lengthy editorial on the demise of a popular and distinguished personage, full of fulsome and ridiculously sentimental reflections. He sent for the Editor and reprimanded him in the strongest terms for writing such rubbish. On another occasion again, he took him to task for dabbling in social reforms and playing in the hands of the so-called social reformers.

The Swami's eye rested on everything in the monastery, and he was very strict in these days in enforcing discipline. He insisted upon thorough cleanliness; and when he found the floor covered with dust for not having been swept regularly owing to the servants falling ill, he himself would sweep, in order to teach the disciples the necessity of cleanliness, and would not give up the broom to them. Being remonstrated with, as to why he was doing such a thing himself, he would reply, "What does it matter! If left unclean the house will be unhealthy and the monks may become ill." On many an occasion he would examine the beds in order to see that they had been properly cared for and aired. If he found any failing, his reprimand was most severe. And once when 'Bagha', the Math dog, had polluted the water brought for Thakur Puja through the gross carelessness on the part of one of the junior members, he was greatly vexed with him. In the last year he insisted that but one full meal should be taken at midday and that breakfast and supper should be in the nature of a light refresh-

ment only. That had been Sri Ramakrishna's custom and his instruction to his disciples, and so it must be followed by all the monks. He insisted that the classes on the Vedas and the Puranas should be held regularly. And some days before his departure, in the way of creating an interest in them, he himself supervised the two classes. Once when teaching he stated that the Brahmanas were the beginning of the Puranas. The Swami Suddhananda, being told by him, brought out from the Math library the book entitled *Gopatha Brahmana*, and at his bidding explained its text, being helped by him at places. He also insisted that none of the members of the Order should take rest after the noon-day meal, but commence at once the class on the Puranas.

The Swami always abhorred extremes. He protested against the too elaborate paraphernalia of daily worship at the Math in the strongest terms and insisted on his disciples devoting more time to sacred study, religious talks and discussions and to meditation, in order to mould their lives and understand the spirit of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, than to superfluous and minute details in conducting the worship. It should be done in the simplest way with due devotion and fervour, along with the former occupations, without taking up the whole time of the monks as it used to be. To enforce this, he introduced the ringing of a bell at appointed hours when the members leaving aside, or rather finishing all other works, must join the classes for study, discussion and meditation. And anyone failing to do so promptly was exposed to severe censure from him. Sometimes this led to carelessness and irregularity in the proper performance of worship and household duties of the Math, which vexed the leader very much and drew from him at times sharp rebukes. Indeed, he was as much a loving as a stern Guru, loved and dreaded at the same time by his disciples, aye, even by his *gurubhāis*. Throughout his stay in the Belur monastery, and especially in the last few months of his life, the Swami used to lay great stress on meditation. About three months before his departure, he made a rule that at four o'clock in the

morning a hand-bell should be rung by someone going from room to room to awaken the members of the Order, and that within half-an-hour all should gather in the chapel to meditate. So also, classes on the Gita, Bhagavata, Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras, and question-classes for religious discussion were regularly held. Over and above these, Swamiji encouraged his disciples to practise austerities. Besides formulating a hard and fast daily routine for the monks, he had also written out, in the early part of the year 1898, a comprehensive set of rules and regulations, for the proper guidance of the monastic Order in the future. In them he had set forth his principal ideas, methods and lines of work, in a concentrated manner, which should form the creed and the ideal of the Math Brotherhood, and the carrying out of which in practice should be their sole aim and endeavour. In his charge to the disciples he repeatedly pointed out that no monastic order could keep itself pure and retain its original vigour, as well as its power of working good, without a definite ideal to work for, without submitting itself to rigorous discipline and vows, and without keeping up culture and education within its fold. He also pointed out that were it not for the severe austerities and Sâdhanâs practised by himself and the Brotherhood, both during the life-time of their Master and after his Mahâsâmâdhi, and that were it not for that divine life as an example and ideal before them, they could not have achieved what they had done.

Thus everyone was bound down by the daily routine with regard to everything,—eating, resting, helping in worship and household duties, study and meditation. There was also a section in the daily routine in which the visitors to the Math, not excluding the lay disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, had to submit to certain restrictions, so that their visits might not in any way upset the working of the daily round of duties at appointed times. Having the welfare of the Order at heart he had to be sometimes harsh and severe in enforcing the observance of the daily routine, though not without occasionally incurring individual displeasure.

Swamiji's joy was great at seeing the full swing of meditation and austerities going on at the Math in these days. He would say to his old friends and lay disciples visiting the Math, "See how the sadhus are practising devotions here. That is right! In the morning and evening, as Sri Ramakrishna used to say, the mind turns naturally, when trained, to the highest spiritual thoughts, and is more easy to control and concentrate. One should try to meditate then on God with undivided attention!" What he preached, he himself practised. Whenever his health permitted,—and fortunately he was somewhat well during this period,—he himself joined the morning meditation in the chapel. He used to rise at 3 A. M. In a prominent part of the worship-room a special seat was spread for him, facing the north. He sat there with others perfectly calm and motionless, "like a mountain of shining snow," absorbed in internal communion, his clasped hands resting on his lap. No one was allowed to leave his seat until Swamiji rose. Oftentimes his meditation would last for more than two hours. Then he would get up uttering, *Shiva! Shiva!* with such a light on his countenance that the impression was unforgettable. Bowing to Sri Ramakrishna he would come downstairs and walk to and fro in the courtyard, singing a song to the Divine Mother or to Shiva with a luminosity of personality seen in his crimson eyes, and peaceful and serene countenance, half-dreamy and half-awake. His presence in the meditation-room invariably lent an added power and intensity to the concentration of the minds of those who sat with him. The Swami Brahmananda once remarked, "Ah! One at once gets rapt if one sits in meditation in company with Noren! I do not feel this when I sit alone."

At those times when the Swami could not join in the general meditation, he would ask one or other if he regularly attended. Sometimes it might be that the question was asked of one who on that very day was absent for some reason or other, though he was as a rule most regular. After an absence of many days Swamiji once went into the worship-

room when others should be meditating. But it so happened that on that particular day of all others, none but two were present there ! He was vexed at this lapse on the part of the inmates, and at once coming down called all before him. He demanded an explanation, and on receiving no satisfactory answer, passed orders that as a penalty none of them should be allowed to have meals at the Math on that day, except the two who meditated and two or three others who were ill at the time. He bade them go out for *mādhukari bhikshā*, or beg handfuls of rice and other foodstuff from the villagers and cook for themselves under the trees in the Math grounds. They were forbidden to go to their friends in Calcutta where they might expect to have a hearty dinner. He spared none, not even the greatest of his *gurubhāis*, whom he otherwise treated with a special reverence. In order to show that he really meant to enforce the penalty, he ordered the one who was in charge of the store-room not to give out the cooking materials for them on that day. So all were obliged to go out for begging their food.

But the leader's kind heart could not bear to see the sight of his dearest ones and those whom he respected being sent away to beg their food under such unpleasant circumstances, and he left for Calcutta on the pretence of some business. He returned to the Math on the next day full of added love and kindness, and made himself merry over the tales of the queer experiences of some, or the better success of others, and rejoiced at the warm welcome and the sumptuous feast which the party that accompanied the *gurubhai* mentioned above had received from some Marwari merchants of Salkhia, three miles distant from the monastery.

Thus, training the monks in all ways the Swami was really their Leader and their Father. And verily, in the last months of his life he was truly the monk and child. Loved by all those who surrounded him, by animals as well as men, joyous in the consciousness of having fulfilled the mission entrusted to him by his blessed Master, and having delivered his message to those who were in his charge, he lived in the monastery a

radiant figure, like Buddha among His disciples in the last days of His life, teaching and preaching to all who came to him unto the very end, with a heart flowing with the milk of loving-kindness and sympathy for all beings.

The days passed as though they were hours. Whatever the mood in which the Swami might be, for his *gurubhais* and disciples his presence was in itself a constant source of joy and inspiration. Whether he was impatient, whether he reprimanded, whether he was exacting or unreasonable, whether he was the Teacher or the meditating Sage, whether he was full of mirth or grave,—whatsoever he was, to his *gurubhais* he was always their beloved “Noren,” and to his disciples the blessed and incomparable Guru. A well-known preacher speaking of the Swami in these days says :—

“At this time he began to feel that he had finished his public work and had delivered before the world the message of his blessed Master, Sri Ramakrishna. The inexhaustible energy and power that were working through the form now made him turn his attention to another work, the work of training the disciples and moulding the character of those that had gathered round him, by his living example as well as by his soul-stirring spiritual instructions. Silently ignoring the world-wide fame that had shone upon his name, he lived unostentatiously in the quiet house of the monastery on the bank of the Ganges, sometimes playing the part of a Guru, or spiritual teacher, sometimes that of a father, sometimes even that of a schoolmaster. Man-making was now the ideal of our illustrious Swami. He held classes on the Vedas and the grammar of Panini, sat in meditation with the monks, morning and evening, and received visitors from various parts of India.....His relation with those who came to him was of the sweetest character. His all-embracing love for each and everybody was truly divine. To the visitors he was a personification of humility.....Through a heart weeping at the sight of the suffering and degradation of the illiterate masses of India, through a soul glowing with the fire of disinterested love for humanity, and through true patriotism and thorough self-sacrificing zeal that did not know what tiring was, he showed to his disciples how a God-inspired soul felt and worked for humanity. Like a cloud in the rainy season that does not roar but deluges the world with water, he now worked silently and proved to his disciples that he was a real worker who *felt* the universal brotherhood of man, who did not talk much, who did not make little sects for universal brotherhood, but whose acts, whose

whole body, whose movements, whose walk, eating, drinking, whose whole life manifested that true brotherhood of mankind, that real love and sympathy for all. By preaching Vedanta, by living and moving in Vedanta, by cosmopolitan charity, and by the simplicity, purity and holiness of his life, the Swami Vivekananda solved the problem concerning the future of his Motherland by holding before the eyes of his disciples, followers, friends and admirers, nay, even the whole nation of India, the ideal of character-building through the light and spirit of Vedanta."

The two last months of his life, May and June, were full of touching little events ; and somehow there were in these days many moments of unaccountable ecstasy and sadness. None could understand ; but to the Swami's own mind flashes of That which was shortly to come as the Highest Realisation dawned here and there on the conscious plane. A feeling of supreme *Kaivalya*, or an inexpressible consciousness of the Freedom of the soul, was with him often. And these were foreshadowings of that which in the near future was to transpire. A desire for Sadhanas and the loftiest emotions descended upon all ; and these were, indeed, as rays of that Sun of Mahasamadhi now travelling towards the full zenith in the firmament of the Swami's great career.

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## CXXVIII.

### OMINOUS SIGNS AND HINTS OF THE COMING END.

The very last days, or more definitely, the last two months which the Swami passed on earth, were indeed full of events foreshadowing the approaching end, though at the time they passed by unsuspected by all those who were about him. Every trifling incident had its portent and a host of associations that throbbed with a peculiarly significant meaning. Sometime after he had returned from the Sacred City, Swamiji greatly desired to see all his Sannyasin disciples, and himself wrote to them asking them to visit him, if only for a short time. The call came to some of his disciples, even to some beyond the seas. Some came; others busily occupied with important works at various centres could not avail themselves of what proved later on to be the last opportunity of seeing once again their beloved Master, to whose cause they had dedicated their whole life and soul. And great indeed was their sorrow then. Oh, if they had but known what the call had meant to them, they would have flown to him leaving aside everything!

The Sister Nivedita, writing about it has said: "Many of his disciples from distant parts of the world gathered round the Swami on his return to Calcutta. Ill as he looked, there was none probably who suspected how near the end had come. Yet visits were paid and farewells exchanged that it had needed voyages round half the world to make."

Strangely enough, as days passed by, the Swami felt more and more the necessity of withdrawing himself from directing the management of the work of the Math, in order to leave those that were about him a free hand. "How often," he said, "does a man ruin his disciples, by remaining always with them! When men are once trained, it is essential that their leader

leave them, for without his absence they cannot develop themselves!" But when he spoke thus, it invariably caused pain to those who loved him. They felt that if he should go, it would mean a terrible blow to the Work. But there were times in his deep meditation in these days, when the Swami cared for nothing save the Infinite Repose. Work and all other bonds were dropping off, though here and there he might express some anxiety on that score. Now more than ever did he withdraw himself from all outer concerns. Meditation became his one great occupation. The Master and the Mother and the Work were constantly in his mind, though as to the latter he had a hard struggle to break himself away from it and cease to take any real personal interest in the matter. Mental *tapasya* now took up the whole of his time. "Even those things which had interested him most wore a far-away aspect now." His *gurubhais* and disciples became more than ever anxious at seeing their beloved Leader surround himself with an atmosphere of great mental austerity and meditation. The prophecy of Sri Ramakrishna that Noren would merge in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi when at the end of his work he would realise who and what he really was and refuse to remain in the body, constantly haunted their memory. Not long before his departure, writes the Sister Nivedita, some of his brother-monks were one day talking over the old days, and one of them asked him quite casually, "Do you know yet who you were, Swamiji?" His unexpected reply, "Yes, I know now!" overawed them into silence, and none dared question him further on this subject. Thenceforward, with all, the fear of an approaching end that might come at any moment increased.

Everything about him in these days was so deliberate and full of meaning that it seemed strange that none apprehended the true import at the time. But they might have been deceived by the Swami's usual cheerful bearing, and by the fact that since the beginning of June he seemed to have become perfectly himself again.

One day, about a week before the end, the Swami bade

his disciple, the Swami Suddhananda, to bring the Bengali Almanac to him. When this was done, he turned several pages of it beginning from the current day and kept the book in his room. He was seen several times on subsequent days studying the Almanac intently, as if he was undecided about something he wanted to know. Only after he had passed away did the relation of this incident to that of the Swami's Mahasamadhi dawn on the sorrowing *gurubhais* and disciples; and then they realised how awesome must have been that state of mind, how powerful the insight of his soul when he must have decided to throw off the body himself on a certain day and be free of all bonds, and the day he chose of all others was the Fourth of July! This showed the conscious purpose he had resolved upon. They likewise remembered that Sri Ramakrishna lying ill on his death-bed had asked a disciple to read to him from the Bengali Almanac. When this was done he bade the disciple to proceed on to the next and the next day, summarily dismissing them one after another till it came to the Bengali date corresponding to the sixteenth of August. He attentively heard all that was written under it and said quietly, "That will do! That will do!" Then also the disciples did not know what the Master had in view.

Three days before his passing as he was walking up and down on the spacious lawn of the monastery in the afternoon with some one of the Math, the Swami pointed to a particular spot on the Ganges side where now a *mandir* has been erected in his honour, and said to him gravely. "When I give up the body, cremate it there!"

One also recalls his prophecy made to the Swami Achyutananda at Bareilly as early as 10th. of August, 1897, when he told him that he would live only five or six years more. (*Vide* Vol III. page 185.) More significant still was the prophetic utterance with which he startled his group of disciples at Dacca in 1901, when after finishing his public lectures there he came unexpectedly one day to them with a serious look, and all of a sudden said deliberately: "I shall

at the most live about a year more ! I feel it my duty now to take my mother to the holy places of pilgrimage which she desires to visit. I am therefore going to show her Chandranath and Kamakhya. Those who would accompany me must pay proper honour to women. Which of you wish to go with me ?”

The Sister Nivedita, introducing many significant facts in connection with the Swami's *Mahasamadhi* and his foreknowledge of it, writes as follows in her well-known work, “The Master As I Saw Him” :—

“When June closed, however, he knew well enough that the end was near. ‘I am making ready for death !’ he said to one who was with him, on the Wednesday before he died. ‘A great *tapasya* and meditation has come upon me, and I am making ready for death !’

“And we who did not dream that he would leave us, till at least some three or four years had passed, knew nevertheless that the words were true. News of the world met but a far-away rejoinder from him at this time. Even a word of anxiety as to the scarcity of the rains, seemed almost to pass him by as in a dream. It was useless to ask him now for an opinion on the questions of the day. ‘You may be right,’ he said quietly, ‘but I cannot enter any more into these matters. I am going down into death !’

“Once in Kashmir, after an attack of illness, I had seen him lift a couple of pebbles, saying, ‘Whenever death approaches me, all weakness vanishes. I have neither fear, nor doubt, nor thought of the external. I simply busy myself making ready to die. I am as hard as *that*—and the stones struck one another in his hand—for I *have* touched the Feet of God !’

“Personal revelation was so rare with him, that these words could never be forgotten. Again, on returning from the cave of Amarnath, in that same summer of 1898, had he not said, laughingly, that he had there received the grace of Amarnath—not to die till he himself should will to do so ? Now this, seeming to promise that death would never take him by surprise, had corresponded so well with the prophecy of Sri Ramakrishna—that when he should know who and what he was, he would refuse to remain a moment longer in the body—that one had banished from one's mind all anxiety on this score, and even his own grave and significant words at the present time did not suffice to revive it.

“Did we not remember, moreover, the story of the great Nirvikalpa Samadhi of his youth, and how, when it was over, his Master had said,

'This is your mango. Look ! I lock it in my box. You shall taste it once more, when your work is finished !

"And we may wait for that,"—said the monk who told me the tale. 'We shall know when the time is near. For he will tell us that again he has tasted his mango.'

"How strange it seems now, looking back on that time, to realise in how many ways the expected hint was given, only to fall on ears that did not hear, to reach minds that could not understand !

"It would seem, indeed, that in his withdrawal from all weakness and attachment, there was one exception. That which had ever been dearer to him than life, kept still its power to move him. It was on the last Sunday before the end that he said to one of his disciples, 'You know the WORK is always my weak point ! When I think *that* might come to an end, I am all undone !'

"On Wednesday of the same week, the day being *Ekdashi*, and himself keeping the fast in all strictness, he insisted on serving the morning meal to the same disciple. Each dish as it was offered—boiled seeds of the jack-fruit, boiled potatoes, plain rice, and ice-cold milk—formed the subject of playful chat ; and finally, to end the meal, he himself poured the water over the hands, and dried them with a towel.

" 'It is I who should do these things for you, Swamiji ! Not you for me !' was the protest naturally offered. But his answer was startling in its solemnity—'Jesus washed the *feet* of His disciples !'

"Something checked the answer, 'But that was the *last* time !' as it rose to the lips, and the words remained unuttered. This was well. For here also, the last time had come.

"There was nothing sad or grave about the Swami during these days. In the midst of anxiety about over-fatiguing him, in spite of conversation deliberately kept as light as possible, touching only upon the animals that surrounded him, his garden experiments, books and absent friends, over and beyond all this, one was conscious the while of a luminous presence, of which his bodily form seemed only as a shadow, or symbol. Never had one felt so strongly as now, before him, that one stood on the threshold of an infinite light. Yet none was prepared, least of all on that last happy Friday, July the 4th, on which he appeared so much stronger and better than he had been for years, to see the end so soon."

On the Day of Mahâsamâdhi itself, whether consciously or intuitively, his actions were most deliberate and full of meaning. Of all others, the solitary meditation he under-

went for three hours in the morning from eight to eleven was the most striking. He had arisen rather early from his bed and had spent the time in much recollection and some quiet conversation. Having partaken of his tea, he entered the chapel of the monastery. Suddenly, it was noticed that he had closed all the windows and had bolted all the doors. What transpired there, no one can ever know, save that in his meditation his own Master and the Divine Mother,—to his own realisation One and the Same Personality,—were present before him in living spiritual contact. For when he had finished his *Dhyānam*, and when his mind descended from those Exalted Heights of Insight, finding himself in sweet communion with the Infinite, he broke forth in a touching song in which the Highest *Jñānam* mingled with the Highest Bhakti.

Never before had he performed such a meditation in the monastery. And most singular of all was the secrecy of that hour when to be alone and undisturbed in that Final Meditation before his Lord, he had performed such an uncommon act as *bolting* the chapel-doors, for he could never meditate in a closed room.

Descending the stairs of the *Thākurghar*, he walked backwards and forwards in the courtyard of the monastery a transfigured presence, his mind most inwardly withdrawn. Suddenly the 'tenseness' of his thought expressed itself in a whisper audible enough for the Swami Premananda to overhear, as he chanced to be near by, in the verandah of the chapel. The Swami was saying to himself: "If there were another Vivekananda, he would understand what Vivekananda has done! And yet,—how many Vivekanandas shall be born in time!!" This remark startled his *gurubhāḍi*, for never did the Swami speak thus, save when the floodgates of his soul were thrown open and the Living Waters of the Highest Consciousness rushed forth.

Another unusual incident took place when the Swami, who was not in the habit of taking his food with his *gurubhāḍis* and disciples, dined with them in the refectory on

this last day of his life. Still another strange occurrence was the manner in which he relished his food. He had never felt better, he said. The truth was, he *already* existed in his Yoga Form.

This same Friday morning he expressed a desire to have the Kali Puja performed at the monastery on the following day, that being an auspicious day for the worship of the Mother,—Saturday with *Amāvasyā*. Soon after, that morning the Swami Ramakrishnananda's father, a devout worshipper of Kali, came. On seeing him, the Swami was delighted and exclaimed, "O, here is Bhattāchārya Mahāshaya come!" Thereupon, explaining his intention to him, he called the Swamis Suddhananda and Bodhananda and instructed them to secure all the necessities for the intended ceremony, which they hastened to do.

Coming down from the worship-room after his meditation, the Swami asked the Swami Suddhananda to fetch the Sukla Yajur Veda from the library. When the latter had brought it, the Swami told him to read therefrom the *mantram* beginning with the words, *Sushumnāh Suryarasmih*, with the commentary on it. The disciple read the *sloka* together with the *bhāṣya*. When he had finished a part of the *bhāṣya*, the Swami remarked, "This interpretation of the passage does not seem suitable to my mind. Whatever may be the commentator's interpretation put on the word, *Sushumnā*, the seed, or the basis, of what the Tantras, in the later ages, speak of as the *Sushumnā* nerve channel in the body, is contained here, in this Vedic *mantram*. You, my disciples, should try to discover the true import of these *slokas* and make original reflections and commentaries on the Shastras."

From his reading into the meaning of the *mantram*, and from his desire of performing the Kali Puja on the next day, it seems that on this day, the idea of the *shathachakra* and its *sādhana* was especially present in his mind. The *shathachakra sādhana* consists, in short, in the awakening of the six dormant lotus-centres in the body, by means of

concentrated meditation along the lines indicated by the Yogis and the Tantrics, the consummation being reached in the realisation of the union or the oneness of the *Jivâtman* and the *Paramâtman* in the *Sahasrâra*, or the Thousand-petalled lotus at the crown of the head, and the soul of man merged in the infinite bliss bursts the bonds of the body for ever.

The passage above referred to is the fortieth Sloka in the eighteenth chapter of Madhyandini recension of *Vâjāsaneî Samhita* of the *Sukla Yajur Veda*, and runs as follows :—

सुषुम्णः सूर्यरश्मिश्चन्द्रमागन्धर्वस्तस्य नक्षत्रारायप्सरसो भेक्षुरयो  
नाम । स न इदं ब्रह्मचरं पातु तस्मै स्वाहा वाट् ताभ्य स्वाहा ॥

The purport of Mahidhara's *bhashya* on the above may be put as follows :—

"That Chandra (Moon) who is of the form of *Gandharva*, who is *Sushumnâ*, that is, Giver of supreme happiness to those who perform Sacrifices (*Yajnas*), and whose rays are like the rays of the Sun,—may that Chandra protect us Brâhmanas and Kshatriyas ! We offer our oblations to Him (*Svâhâ vât*) ! His (Chandra's) *Apsarâs* are the stars, who are illuminators (hence called *Vekurayas*) —we offer our oblations to them (*Svâhâ*) !"

At one P.M., a quarter of an hour after the midday repast, the Swami entered the Brahmacharis' room and called them to attend the Sanskrit class. The class was held on Sanskrit Grammar, the particular book being the "Laghu-Kaumudi" of Varadarâja. One who attended this class writes :—

"The reading lasted for three hours. But no monotony was felt. For he (the Swami) would tell a witty story, or make *bon mots* now and then between his teaching, as he was wont to do. Sometimes the joke would be with reference to the wording of a certain Sutra, or he would play an amusing word-pun upon it, so that it might be the easier recollected. In the course of his doing so on this particular day, he spoke of how he had coached his college



friend, Dasarathi Sanyal, in English History, in one night by following a similar process. He however appeared a little tired after the Grammar class."

Sometime later, the Swami, accompanied by the Swami Premananda, went out for a considerably long walk, as far as the Belur Bazaar. He spoke with his *gurbhāi* on many interesting subjects, and particularly on his proposed scheme of founding a Vedic college in the monastery. In order to gain a clearer view of what the Swami felt on the matter, the Swami Premananda asked the Leader, "What, Swamiji, will be the good of studying the Vedas?" To which the latter replied in a few, simple, but most comprehensive words,—“It will kill out superstitions!”



## CXXIX.

### MAHASAMADHI.

Returning to the Math the Swami talked for a while with the monks and made tender enquiries of them. Oh, if they had but known that these were the last words they would hear from the lips of their beloved and blessed leader, their all in all ! As evening came on, the Swami's mind became more and more withdrawn, and when the bell for *âratî* rang, he retired in the evening stillness to his own room. There he sat in meditation facing the Ganges. What occurred thereafter is best told by those who are members of the Order of Sri Ramakrishna, and whose story of what transpired throughout that day and night forms the best narrative of the passing of the Swami. Each of their reports has an importance of its own, as it gives some new detail and a different angle in the perspective of that awesome event. Being written as they were by the Swami's own *gurubhâis* and disciples, they are filled with a certain apostolic fervour and directness, and, above all, with an intensely living human pathos and literary simplicity.

That written by the Swami Saradananda on the twenty-fourth of July to Dr. Logan, the President of the San Francisco Vedanta Society, reads :—

“\* \* \* We sent a cable to the New York Vedanta Society with directions to communicate to you, and to all friends in the United States, about the Nirvâna of our beloved Swami Vivekananda. He entered into the Life Eternal on July 4, Friday evening at ten minutes past nine. It came upon us so suddenly that even the Swamis in the other rooms of the Math had not had the slightest intimation of it. The Swami was meditating in his own room at 7 p. m., leaving word that none was to come to him until called for. An hour after, he called one of us and requested him to fan him on the head. He lay down on his bed quietly and the one tending him thought he was either sleeping or meditating. An hour after, his hands trembled a little and he breathed once very

deeply. Then all was quiet for a minute or two. Again he breathed in the same manner, his eyes getting fixed in the centre of his eyebrows and his face assuming a divine expression, and all was over.

"All through the day he felt as free and easy as possible, nay, freer than he had felt for the last six months. He meditated in the morning for three hours together, took his meals with a perfect appetite, gave talks on Sanskrit Grammar, Philosophy and on the Vedas to the Swamis at the Math for more than two hours and discoursed on the Yoga Philosophy. He walked in the afternoon for about two miles, and on returning enquired after every one very tenderly. While resting for a time he conversed on the rise and fall of nations with his companions, and then went into his own room to meditate—you know the rest..."

A monastic disciple of the Swami has written :—

"The Mahāsamādhi took place a few minutes after nine p. m. The supper bell had just been rung when the inmates were called to see what had happened to Swamiji. Swamis Premananda and Nischayananda began to chant aloud the name, 'Ramakrishna', believing that he might be brought to consciousness thereby. But he lay there in his room on his back, motionless, and the course proved fruitless. Swami Advaitananda asked Swami Bodhananda to feel Swamiji's pulse. After doing this for a while, he stood up and cried aloud. Swami Advaitananda then told Nirbhayananda, 'Alas, what are you looking on ! Hasten to Dr. Mohendra Nath Mozumdar and bring him here as soon as you can.' Another also crossed the river and went to Calcutta to give information to the Swamis Brahmananda and Saradananda who were there on that day, and bring them to the Math. They arrived at about half past ten. The Doctor examined him thoroughly, found the life suspended, and tried to bring him back by asking someone to move both the hands in a semi-circle, backwards and forwards, to induce artificial respiration ; at twelve p. m. the Doctor pronounced life extinct. Dr. Mozumdar said that it might have been due to sudden heart-failure. Dr. Bipin Bihari Ghosh who came from Calcutta in the morning said that it was due to apoplexy. But none of the doctors who came afterwards and heard of the symptoms could agree. Whatever they might say, the monks of the Math have the unshakable conviction that the Swami had voluntarily cast off the body in Samadhi, when he did not want to remain any longer in the world, as predicted by Sri Ramakrishna.

"Sister Nivedita came in the morning. She sat all the while by Swamiji and fanned him, till the body was brought down at two p. m. to the porch leading to the courtyard, where the *Aratrikam* was

performed before taking it to the spot which had been indicated by Swamiji himself for cremation."

Still another version of the Swami's passing reads :

"On the fourth of July, he became extraordinarily meditative. At this time he was in perfect health. In the morning he meditated for three hours. During the day he held a class on Sanskrit Grammar for about three hours, and remarked how much better he was feeling. In the afternoon he went out to take a walk with one of his colleagues. He walked two miles. In the evening he went to his own room and again sat in meditation ; a Brahmachârin was in attendance. Swamiji took his beads and did *japam*, and directed the Brahmachârin who attended on him to sit outside and do the same until he was called for. About forty-five minutes later he called the Brahmachârin in, told him to fan his head and then seemed to have gone to sleep. At about nine, he gave a sudden start and then drew two long breaths and sank into a meditative state. The Brahmachârin, unable to understand what the matter was, immediately called an aged monk. Following him came other Sannyâsins. In the meantime the Yogi had merged himself in the *Nirvikalpa Samâdhi*, through the path of deep meditation. The aged Sannyâsin who was called in, came and felt for his pulse, and then asked another monk to do the same, but both found it had stopped. The great Master had thrown away the garment of his physical body and become one with the Great, Invisible, Universal Soul. At first it was taken to be a short Samâdhi and a Brother repeated the name of the Divine Master in his ear. Seeing no sign of life, however, Dr. Mohendra Nath Mozumdar of Barahanagar was called. He tried to induce breath artificially, but without success. No one that saw the Swami's body after his departure, would say that he ever became ill or that he was dead ; he looked so fresh, and so healthy and strong. Indeed, even in death, he looked as handsome as if he were the great God Shiva in Samâdhi, his large lotus-eyes having their balls sunk into the brain, as it were, and the whites still shedding lustre..."

A *gurubhai* of the Swami writes in the *Udbodhan* :

"\*\*\*He next meditated from eight to eleven a. m. in the *Thâkurghar*. On other days he never meditated so long at one sitting. Nor could he meditate in an unventilated room, with doors and windows shut ; but on this day he meditated after having shut and bolted all the doors and windows of the chapel.

"After meditation he began to sing a beautiful song on *Shyâmâ* (Mother Kali). The monks below were charmed to hear the sweet strains of it coming from the *Thâkurghar*. The song ran thus, 'Is my Mother dark,—the dark-featured Mother, with Her dishevelled hair, illumines the lotus of the heart ! \* \* \*'

"He took his noon-day meal that day with great relish. After dinner he taught the disciples 'Laghukaumudi', a standard work on the Sanskrit Grammar, for more than two hours and a half. Then in the afternoon he took a walk for nearly two miles with a *gurubhāṣī*. For many days past he could not walk so far. He said he was very well that day. In the course of the walk he expressed his particular desire to establish a Vedic school in the Math. After returning from the walk, he attended to some personal needs and said afterwards that he felt very light in body. After conversation for some time, he went to his own room and told one of his disciples to bring him his rosary. Then, asking the disciple to wait outside, he sat down to tell his beads and meditate in the room alone. He had thought of worshipping Kali next day, which was a Saturday with *Amāvāsyā*. He had talked much about doing this that day. (He did it mentally perhaps.)

"After meditating and telling his beads for about an hour he laid himself down on his bed on the floor, and calling that disciple who was waiting outside, told him to fan his head a little. He had still the rosary in his hand. The disciple thought the Swami was perhaps having a light sleep. About an hour later, his hand shook a little. Then came two deep breaths. The disciple thought he fell into Samādhi. He then went downstairs and called a Sannyasin, who came and found on examination that there was neither respiration nor beating of the pulse. Meanwhile another Sannyāsin came, and thinking him to be in Samādhi, began to chant aloud the Thakur's name continually, but in no way was the Samādhi broken ! That night an eminent physician was called in. He examined the body for a long time and afterwards said that life was extinct.

"The next morning it was found that the eyes were bloodshot and that there was a little bleeding through the mouth and the nostrils. Other doctors remarked that it was due to a rupture of a blood-vessel in the brain. This, however, clearly leads to the conclusion that in the process of *Japam* and meditation, his *Brahmarandhira* must have been pierced when he left the body !

"After his Mahasamadhi several doctors came and examined his body minutely and tried to bring him back to consciousness. They exhausted all the means and methods of rousing him which the storehouse of their knowledge could bring forth, but all was of no avail. They could not, in point of fact, make out the real cause of his death. He died, in truth, of his own accord. He was born a Yogin and he died a Yogin !"

A Sannyāsin devotee of the Swami writes :—

" \* \* \* His exit from the world was as wonderful as his entry into it,

aye, was as sudden and unexpected as his appearance before the world as the Apostle of Hinduism.

"His last words to the Brahmacharin who was attending him, before beginning the meditation in which he passed into Samādhi leading into Mahāsamādhi were, 'Wait and *meditate* till I call you !' As these were his last words on earth spoken to a monastic disciple, they might well be taken to be the Master's Final Commandment to all his monastic disciples."

Still another version reads :

"\*\*\*Since a month before his passing away, Swamiji used to meditate much more than usual ; and on these days it seemed as if he had no disease in the body.....Before going for the afternoon walk with Swami Premananda he talked with him in a merry mood on various topics concerning the West. In the evening he went up to his room to meditate. When Swamiji called the disciple in to fan his head, he told him to open all the windows of the room because, as he said, he was feeling hot. Saying this he laid himself down on the bedding on the floor. After the Brahmachârin had gently fanned him at the head for a while, the Swamiji said to him, 'All right ; no more need of fanning ! It would be better if you shampood my feet a little.' Saying this, he seemed to have fallen asleep very shortly. In this way one hour passed ; the disciple was shampooing him ; the Swami was lying on his left side. He changed sides once within this time, and shortly after that, just as babies cry out as if dreaming during their sleep, so he cried in exactly the same way. The Brahmacharin noticed a little after this, that Swamiji breathed a deep breath, and his head rolled down by the pillow. Another long deep breath like the preceding one, and then all was calm and still about him like death ! The tired child slept in the lap of the Mother, whence there was no awakening to this world of Mâyâ !

"Swamiji passed away at the age of thirty-nine years, five months and twenty-four days, thus fulfilling a prophecy which was frequently on his lips, 'I shall never live to see forty.' "

The Sister Nivedita continuing her narrative recorded in the last chapter writes :—

"He had spent hours of that day in formal meditation. Then he had given a long Sanskrit lesson. Finally he had taken a walk from the monastery gates to the distant highroad.

"On his return from this walk, the bell was ringing for even-song, and he went to his own room, and sat down, facing towards the Ganges, to meditate. It was the last time. The moment was come that had

been foretold by his Master from the beginning. Half an hour went by, and then on the wings of that meditation, his spirit soared whence there could be no return, and the body was left, like a folded vesture, on the earth."

But as for the Swami himself, of the grandeur of his flight into Reality, only the soul immersed in the deepest meditation can hope to gain a glimpse.

Now, indeed, 'the box containing the choicest mango of Realisation,' which the Swami had tasted in his first experience of the *Nirvikalpa Samādhi* at the Cossipur Garden, was again unlocked, or it might be, was forced open through the power of his own meditation. That "thin veil of Maya," of which Sri Ramakrishna had spoken, which covered the *Chinmaya* Personality of the Swami, so that he might work, was finally rent asunder, and the Highest Consciousness now shone forth. The "I" he was on earth now expanded until it burst its circle of limitations and merged in that Infinite Circumference, which is Brahman. Sri Ramakrishna had said that his chief disciple's sleep was as the meditation upon God. This final sleep was verily the awakening into the Highest consciousness of his Real Self.

On the wings of meditation, higher and higher his soul took flight ; from one sphere of meditation unto another he sped. Reaching Dhāranā, his soul soared into Dhyāna, whence on still swifter wings of the highest thought, it sped into Samādhi, where even thought is dead and all sense of separateness is cast aside, and where the *Man-that-was* becomes the *God-that-Is*. Aye, leaving the body like a cast-off garment, he entered into the very highest Samadhi, the Great and Final End of all Illusion. Now, indeed, the Book of Experience was closed for ever ; and he lay in the Divine Mother's arms like a tired Child after a life of superhuman labour to fulfil the glorious mission entrusted to him by his Divine Master, of which the world stood so much in need.

Like another Buddha, he fled, finally, beyond the boundaries of all sensation and idea, until his soul merged in the infinite bliss of Nirvāna. Having scaled the Himalayas of

the Soul, at the moment of the Great Transition like another Sankaracharya he became transfigured into the Shiva-Consciousness, which dwells on the Highest Summit of the Spiritual Mount of Kailas.

Vivekananda, the illustrious Yogin, the Seer of Truth, the worthy Son of Ramakrishna, merged in God ! Vivekananda, that world-Teacher, the Spirit Incarnate of Hinduism, the Paragon of Vedantists, merged in the very Spirit of Vedanta Itself ! The Man, the *Nara* that he was, became merged in the Divinity of Narayana Itself !

HARI OM TAT SAT !





## CXXX.

### THE LEAPING FLAMES OF DEATH. \*

A bolt from the blue could not have been more startling in the way of consternation than the news of the death of the Swami Vivekananda. Nothing could have been more appalling or unexpected. The monks at the monastery at Belur were struck dumb with amazement. They could not believe their eyes. The words of death seemed unreal and impossible to their ears. Yet they were stupefied with the thought of their bitter, irreparable loss. It seemed so unreal ; but the body lay dead in the monastery. There was no doubt as to the lifeless expression on the countenance. The monastery was shrouded in gloom. The face of every monk wore an expression of utmost bewilderment and painful confusion. Telegraph-wires were heralding the news broadcast even to Europe and America. Everywhere, those who heard or read the hasty message cried out in the agony of their heart, "Is this possible!" In the city of Calcutta thousands were dumbfounded ; and everyone was suddenly conscious of what the passing of the Swami Vivekananda meant to all India.

During his life-time the Swami had thrown the sweet magic of his personality across the contents of the Revelation he had given unto men. Now that he was gone, a great void was created. To those to whom the news was communicated, or those who heard it casually as it spread over the length and breadth of the land, the Indian world seemed empty for the time being. Some on hearing the news almost fainted, and cried like one who has suffered some serious personal loss—the loss of the dearest and the most treasured one on earth. The news spread like wild fire. All who had ever known, loved, or seen the Swami Vivekananda were paralysed with grief.

But no words can describe the bewilderment at the monastery. It seemed a bad dream. No, it could not be true. And then the thought that he was really gone seized their brains and they became distracted with the pain of grief. Some cried aloud overpowered with their terrible misfortune, others stood about in stolid terror, while others again paced the monastery grounds in tense nervous agitation. Some sat here and there speechless and stupefied with agony. All felt a deep, deep void in their souls and darkness all about.

In the morning people poured into the monastery from all sides. Carriages passed through the monastery gate and boats landed a large number of passengers at the Ghât. Sadness reigned everywhere. The body lay in state in the room which only a day or two ago rang with the sweetest laughter and with the stirring eloquence of the inspired monk. Hundreds passed before the body in solemn silence, their eyes debating whether he was dead. Then they would turn from the lifeless form of him whom they had loved more than their own life, in a tempest of abandoned grief, saying, "Is our Swamiji really gone?" And those who had realised the greatness of the Teacher as the very bulwark of the Sanâtana Dharma would look at the monks as if to ask, "What does this mean! Shall we not hear his voice any more in the remodelling of Hinduism and the spiritual regeneration of our Motherland!" And one looking at the face of the Swami Vivekananda on this day, vowed then and there to devote his life thenceforth solely in the service of his country.

Never had the monks known such a bereavement since the time of the passing of their Lord Sri Ramakrishna. Never had that undying scene of the cremation of the body of their Master enacted at the burning-ghat in Baranagore, on the opposite bank of the Ganges before them, been brought more forcibly than now to their minds within these sixteen years of the most eventful life. They felt that the bottom had fallen out of everything. When the Master himself had passed away, he had given them to Noren. At that time, because of that,

they were somewhat comforted. Now that both had gone, speaking physically, the monks felt themselves as strangers in the caravanseerai of this world.

Even to the very last moment, and in spite of the conclusion of learned doctors, there was a half-mad hope, baffling all reason, that the Swami Vivekananda might, after all, return to mortal consciousness. *Perhaps* this was the very highest Samadhi; *perhaps* he might return from it. For this reason the body was left within the room upstairs until a late hour of the next day so that death could be made surest of the sure. All remembered that this was the very condition of the Swami's body in the garden-house at Cossipur at the time of his first experience of the *Nirvikalpa-Samadhi*; at that time, also, they had suspected that he had forever gone; but it was not so. He had returned gloriously illuminated. Might it not be so again! They had hoped against hope and prayed the whole night long: they still hoped and prayed.

But each moment the body became colder and more rigid. And this occasion had been preceded by the Swami's own statements that a great *tapasyā* had come upon him and that he was going down into death. Finally, there was no doubt. The Soul had sped forever into the regions of Everlasting Light and Life.

When they were forced to believe that he was physically no more, the elder monks despatched some of the disciples to Calcutta to herald the news. Some were sent to telegraph the message to the great outside world, and to foreign lands. Some were sent to get sandal-wood and incense, etc., and to gather masses of flowers. All this had now been done. Incense was burning in many quarters of the monastery. The whole building was thrown open, and it seemed that a great vacancy had taken possession of the whole place. The monastery grounds were crowded with people. The names of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda rent the air in high-pitched exclamations of sorrow and of praise. They were heard across the Ganges, in the villages and temples on the other side,

and were carried to the temple and the grounds of Dakshineswar, stirring the souls of all to tears. Everyone in the monastery felt that this was the last time that they could look upon the blessed form of the Master, who had preached the Modern Gospel to many peoples of near and distant lands, whose greatness had been felt everywhere, whose personality was as of the Divine Fisherman of Judæa, catching thousands of souls into the nets he had cast forth.

Towards the afternoon the body was brought downstairs to the porch in front of the courtyard. There on a cot the body lay, wrapped in the poverty-symbolic robes of the Sannyâsin. The soles of his feet were painted over with *âltâ*, a kind of crimson pigment, and impressions were taken of them on muslin, to be preserved as a sacred memento. Then the *âratî* service was performed, this being the last rites of worship to that form which had been the instrument for the revelation of the Highest Truth. Lights were waved ; *mantrams* were recited ; conch-shells were blown, bells rung and incense burned. All throughout a Presence was felt of inspiring power and glory. At the end of the ceremony some bowed low, others fell prostrate on the ground in salutation, and those who were disciples, touched their heads at the feet of their Blessed Master's earthly form.

When the procession was forming itself, and the cot upon which the body rested was slowly lifted to the shoulders of the Sannyasin Sons of Sri Ramakrishna, all present felt a great throbbing of life, in which sadness and ecstasy combined. Time after time arose the thrilling shouts of "*Jaya Guru Maharajji Ki Jaya! Jaya Sri Swamiji Maharajki Jaya,*" from the depths of the devotees' hearts.

As the gathering began to move, and the procession formed itself irregularly into a crowd, one thought of the very body of the Swami as too priceless a treasure to be consigned to the devouring flames. The body, clothed in *Gerrua*, had been beautifully decorated with garlands and masses of flowers, and he appeared like a God who had attained immortality vanquishing Death with scorn. The procession moved slowly

through the courtyard, across the spacious lawn, until it reached the Bilva-tree, which stands in the south-eastern corner of the grounds. There, slightly ahead and to the left, on the very spot where the Swami himself had instructed to cremate his body, the funeral pyre had been built.

In the solemnity of that hour only one feeling pervaded—the feeling of the greatness of the world-conquering hero.

Finally amidst wild sobs of grief and frantic exclamation of the names of the Master and His Chief Disciple, the body was placed upon the funeral pyre by the monks and disciples. Reeds were lighted, and with the monks scores of persons lighted the pyre. Slowly and steadily the fire encircled the pyre, running along the logs of wood and into every crevice. Soon tongues of fire began to shoot up, snapping at first and then bursting forth here and there into wild and open flames. Then the whole pyre was ablaze. Dark columns of smoke, mingled with the sweet odours of burning incense, sandal-wood and spices, soared high into the sky like thick clouds. The departed monk's garments were burned. The flowers withered. The heat became scorching. The light became radiant. The great sadness of the devotees' hearts was likewise being saturated with light. Slowly but surely a great Consciousness arose in the minds of all. "No, this was not the man, the Swami Vivekananda, that was burning. That was the body only." Deep in their hearts, scattering the gloom of the deepest sorrow, they felt the living presence of that freed soul clothed with light. And Peace stole softly into their souls, a peace strangely mixed with sadness, softening its intensity, calming its abandonment!

The light of the pyre grew more and more intense and as the first shadows of darkness began to fall, they gave contrast to the glaring funeral lights. Slowly, in the deep dusk the flames died down. In the souls of those who stood about, an intense calm prevailed. And as the flames died down lower and lower, and it was evident that all that which composed the body had returned to its original elements, and when only

burning coals and smouldering embers remained, the monks poured Ganges water upon the pyre, and in the darkness their prayers went up to the Lord for guidance and protection. Agreat, great peace came,—and utmost resignation. All felt that the Lord knew best ; and in the depths of their hearts, and in the depths of their sorrow, they prayed, with bated breath, "O Lord ! Thy Will be done !"

On the next day, the monks piously gathered the sacred relics for preservation as the greatest earthly treasure for themselves and future generations. Now stands a shrine upon that very funeral spot. An altar has been built, and upon it a marble likeness of the Master has been placed, a likeness which is a Presence, as well. And here the young monks, and the old, are wont to pray and meditate in the silence of their inmost heart. The table of the altar represents the very spot on which the body of the great Swami rested in the flames. The relics are kept, some deposited here, and others in a copper receptacle near the altar of Bhagavân Sri Ramakrishnâ.

Love and realisation are deeper than the caverns of death. And the light of illumination dispels the darkness and the gloom of the sorrow-stricken heart. Nor can the Gates of Death prevail against the Consciousness of the Final Freedom of the Self.

True, the monks and lay disciples of the Order were still grief-stricken, but the faith and resignation in their Lord and the accompanying peace had taken away the sting of death. Deep beneath the veils of sorrow, all were aware that *this was not the end*. The same emptiness dwelt in the monastery but within the silence and the illumination of their hearts, all had the full consciousness of the truth that Life in the soul, as their leader possessed, could not have remained long shut up within the prison-walls of earthly existence, and that his constantly mounting realisation must have burned the body-consciousness in its increasing intensity and soared beyond the grasp of death in Nirvikalpa Samâdhi. For many, many months the monks of the Order were seized with the final

passion of the departed Swami for *tapasya* and meditation, so that they might make themselves proper vehicles for the delivery of his message to men and the carrying of his ideas into practice. And in the silence and the joy of their increasing light of soul, they realised more than ever that they also were not of this world ; aye, not even for the seeking of their own salvation. They realised more than ever that they were Sons of Him Who had seen God in Dakshineswar, to fulfil Whose Mission the Swami Vivekananda had taken birth. In this hour of great trial, and forever after, they felt that they too, like the Swami Vivekananda, had come only for a while to help in working out the message of their Lord, and that they, too, should go back to that radiant Region of Boundless Freedom from which they had come, and where the Master and the departed Swami now lived in the full awareness of the Highest Truth,—the Region of Nirvana and the Life Divine.



## CELESTIAL EFFULGENCE.

Like his great Master who had thrown off the cross of mortal life and, having passed through the phenomenon of death, had become glorified and transfigured and had ascended into the true nature of his Self, even so was the Emancipated Soul of him who was known to men as the Swami Vivekananda. He has now resumed his Shining Self. He has "Gone back" to That which he had been ere the call came to him from the Vast on High, to descend for the good of the world into the shadows and the lights of mortal life. The surface consciousness has now been dispersed on his coming to know, as foretold by Sri Ramakrishna, the real nature of himself, whose luminous glory was so frequently revealed on earth in the grand downrushing of his Soul, in the outpouring of the contents of the Modern Gospel of Hinduism. Having fulfilled his divine purpose he has burst asunder the bonds of form, and has ascended into those transcendent realms where live eternally the ideals which he preached with such eloquence to the sons of men. The body broken under the strain of tremendous exertion, he passed on through the path of Yoga to the region of Pure Spirit, the region of *Akhanda-Sat-Chit-Ananda*. He saw the Torrential Lights of God ; he himself became the Effulgence of the Most High, passing from the sense of Power to That which is the Power beyond Power. Sensations, emotions, were in that hour swallowed up by the Grandeur of his Soul, and passing beyond sensations and beyond all emotions, he entered the region of Beatitude. And the Glory of God shone upon him, and the Love of God, the Infinite Knowledge, the Transcendent Life of the Infinite Nature, descended upon him. And then the sound of the earth became as Silence to his soul, and the discordaœu



of the universe became as Peace unto his spirit, and the darkness and the nescience of the world were broken up by him with the Shafts of the Eternal Light of Brahman. And he saw Him Who gives the soul its strength, Whose orders all Devas obey, Whose shadow is immortality and Whose slave is Death.

Infinite, Luminous Freedom, Glory, Power, Blessedness, Silence and Beatitude, which come of the Vision of Brahman, the Becoming of Brahman, the Being of Brahman,—all these he entered into ; all these he *became*. And from this radiant height, from this attaining of the Highest, the transcendental Absolute, where he saw the Ocean of Nirvāna and plunged into the Silence of that Immortal Life, he emerged as a giant whose nature would not allow him to *remain* even in Infinite Blessedness and Bliss ! For the good of the world he retained the egoism of knowledge, the luminous consciousness of Supreme Wisdom in the *chinmaya* body he now assumed, in order to serve the world. And in the sphere of those who wear the *Anandamayakosha*, the body of bliss, in the region of the Absolute where souls are most inwardly withdrawn, he found the Master dwelling as the Radiance of God !

And from this sweeping grandeur, from this effulgent height, his thought and soul descended into the circle of his disciples and brother-monks, touching the centre of their souls. And the sorrow of their hearts was suddenly swallowed up in ecstasy ; and they had a glimpse, for a sudden moment of insight, into the nature of that Reality which his own soul had become. And unto each one of those who were thus favoured, was vouchsafed a message in accordance with the proclivities of one's own spiritual nature. And in the struggle to have glimpses of the truth and to follow the life of the ideals, their souls were bound indissolubly to the Region of that Blessedness so often sensed on the earth in meditation and realised eternally when the bonds of body are snapped asunder. And one disciple at the very time of the departure saw the face of the Swami, with the

tongue protruding as a child's when in great surprise. She had been meditating in the quiet of the late evening hours when this vision occurred. She knew some days later that which had taken place in the way of his passing beyond. Another disciple dreamt that night that Sri Ramakrishna himself had died anew. And in the morning the messenger arrived at the gate heralding the news. Some other disciples who were far away, found themselves in the course of their meditation shaken to the core of their souls by some unaccountable sweeping of emotion. Near and far amongst the loved ones of his soul there seemed to have come a sudden and inexplicable perception of a great void and the universe seemed to be vanishing from view. One was seized with a mysterious fear, feeling himself utterly lonely in the world. Another, again, was overcome with an inscrutable sorrow, and burst into tears not knowing why. And then the explanation came,—the tidings of the Death-surpassing Ascension of the Seers and Saviours,—“The Swami Vivekananda has entered Mahâsamâdhi.” And all remembered the words of the Man of Dakshineswar and knew that the Swami had passed away consciously, and of his own freewill. One overcome with the flood-tides of a sea of radiance fell prostrate upon the ground crying out, “Shiva ! Shiva !” And on the same night the monk Ramakrishnananda while wrapt in sleep was aroused by a voice—the Voice of the Swami Vivekananda himself, who came to him clad in splendour and glory and saying in an intimate, divine, soul-touching and triumphant spirit, “Soshi ! Soshi ! I have spat out the body !”

Verily he had “spat out the body” and was in the realm of Immortality where death and Maya cannot approach. Verily he lived in the Spirit ; he was the embodiment of the Spirit ; never, never was he the form. And across the sad event of the passing of his presence from the world, ring out with a triumphant meaning the words he spoke, in times long before his death, “It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body—to cast it off like a disused garment,

But I shall not cease to work ! I shall inspire men everywhere, until the world shall know that it is one with God !" And that inspiration has come. And now that it has come it shall remain as the Paraclete, remaining with the sons of men until the whole world attains the Consummation of the Highest Truth. Aye, he scorned Mukti for himself until he could lead all beings in the universe to its portals. Vision and Realisation are imperishable. Being of the truth they are eternal. And he is Eternal, his is Eternity in the palm of his hand, as it were, who has found the Truth. And the notes of Freedom and Realisation are heard beyond the boundaries of life and death ; and with the numerous devotees, the apostles and disciples of the Modern Gospel,—the prophets and the saints and seers of the Sanātana Dharma,—which is already now and which is yet to come in all the glorious unfoldment of the Future, the Voice of India rises and shall rise from the present time and into the distant centuries in those shouts of praise and triumph,—

*Jaya Sri Guru Maharajiki Jaya !*

*Jaya Sri Swamiji Maharajki Jaya !*

*Jaya Sri Sanatana Dharmaki Jaya !*

And the benediction of the Most High rests now over the world anew. The Flames of the Sanātana Dharma have been re-kindled. Truly, gods have walked amongst the sons of men ! Verily the Lord Himself, Truth Itself was embodied as Ramakrishna-Vivekananda for the good of the world. The Spirit of India Herself has been made Flesh ; and They, the Twin-Souls Who were born to once more awaken Her, the great Mother of religions, have passed from Flesh into the Silence of the Infinite, having fulfilled the Mission and having given the Message. Verily, the Divine Mother Herself, the Destroyer of Illusion and the Giver of the Waters of Life, has walked upon the pathways of the earth ; and the Sun of Brahman has bathed the world with Its rays anew, scattering the clouds of darkness and ignorance, spreading the Light of the Celestial Effulgence ! And the ends of the world have met and the

Gospel of the Age has been preached to the nations of the world. And the Luminous Spirits, who have been the founder and the prophet of the Gospel, are seen in the light of the Declaration of Sri Krishna, who announced the coming of the Incarnations of God whenever the Dharma declines and unrighteousness prevails. And They are to come again and again for the good of the world, for the establishment of righteousness, for the re-interpretation of the Sanâtana Dharma, and for the manifestation of the Kingdom which is not of this world, whose passport is the motto :—

“Renounce ! Renounce ! Realise the Divine Nature !  
Arise ! Awake ! and stop not till the Goal is reached !”

HARI OM TAT SAT !



## CXXXII.

### THE TRANSCENDENT RESURRECTION.

Those about to close this book of the life-history of the Swami Vivekananda have seen the uncommon greatness of the man. Though gone from the plane of earth, though a handful of ashes is all that is left of his mortal frame, he lives immortal in the expanding greatness of his work. Still do his words live on, embodying that power and realisation which were his. Still does his spirit work in the inspiration hundreds have gathered from his recorded words. He lives eternal, for he was a real factor, an instrument in the fulfilment of a Divine Purpose—the awakening of the souls of millions. He gave birth to a spiritual world which is in the coming. He dwells still amongst men as the embodiment of his teachings. The light of Realisation can never be extinguished, and from far and near come the disciples who have never seen him in body, but who have nevertheless become saturated with his spirit and thought. Even while on earth his was the immortality of insight, the throbbing life of the Soul which knows no death. The human personality with its sweet associations is not gone, and can never go. It still lives on in that eternity of love which was his own. Death had been swallowed up in victory for him even here on earth. He had gone, in the height of his meditation, past the boundaries of death, and resided in the Eternal even in the time of his earthly life. He had struck the powers of his soul against the walls of death and had penetrated beyond into the plane of the triumphant awareness of that which is the Indestructible. He who had known the illumination of Sri Rāmakrishna, upon whom the Spirit of the Mother Herself had descended, entered the realm of death as a lion enters a forest, or as the sun enters a mass of clouds. The sun of his illumination had long dispelled for him all the darkness,

and the uncertainty that ever hang as veils before the ordinary vision.

He still lives as the Power which he was. When the garment of the body had been thrown off, he stood freer than ever in the glorified consciousness of that which he had so often experienced during life in the exalted states of communion with the Highest. And he was not the Form. He was the revelation of the Spirit unto man, like his own Master whose complement he was. He had come upon the adamantine foundations of the Reality even when burdened with the consciousness of the world, and dwelt ever Free in the world of Divine Emancipation! Such was he. And it is impossible, it is contrary to the higher laws of nature, that the Fire of that life *which was and truly is* could ever be extinguished. There are notes of transcendent triumph throughout, in the narrative of the day of death. That All-powerful, Soul-concentrated Consciousness can never die. His immortality is witnessed wherever he exercised his influence during life, and also wherever his Presence is felt since his passing on to Higher Life. Aye, "the great can never die!"

It is not alone the undying memory of his disciples which is the guarantee of his immortality. There are also other things besides. For how can the Soul which has come to know Its Self be measured any longer by the standards of space and time and human reason? All limitations have fallen off. The Divinity alone remains; and there is no circumscribing Divinity. The Soul is immeasurable, unfathomable like the great ocean. The predicates of relative existence do not apply there. The Eternal, the Immensity, the Being of Brahman alone applies. As the body returns to its five elements and thought is thrown back into the Womb of the Cosmic Mind, does the Soul which has achieved emancipation, having entered the domain of Divine Freedom by cutting asunder all personal limitations, soar aloft into the Spaceless, Timeless Region of the Infinite. And there it is more potent than before. All power is concentrated there. The Spirit of Power, the Power beyond power, the Essence of Thought,

Thought beyond thought, service by the mere willing, benediction by the mere intention, benign Presence in the radiance of the spiritual body, the working out of the Divine Mission in and through others by the infusion of the spirit,—such are the attributes of the Christ-Souls and the Buddha-Souls after they have shaken off their earthly form! The farthest ends of the earth, the widest distances are all as a geometrical point to the mere touch of them! And the Swami Vivekananda was such a one!

The Star which never sets has long since risen. Its effulgence becomes more and more luminous with the passing of time and there are no powers in the universe which can obstruct it, for it is of the Lord. Who can resist that tidal wave of spirituality which has been brought into existence by the providence of God, and which is destined to carry away in its omnipotent flood all that is weak, unreal and degrading! Forces of evil and disintegration may dash against it, only to break themselves into pieces. Yet there are carping spirits in the world who would try to tear into pieces his life-work! Addressing those who showed “unjustified signs of causeless, rancorous hostilities, out of absolute malice and envy..... at the success and the celebrity of Sri Ramakrishna and his name,” spontaneously achieved by the Swami, the latter himself has written as follows with regard to the nature of his Master’s work and his mission, which, by the way, are inseparably bound up with his own :—

“Dear friends, vain are these efforts of yours! If this infinite, unbounded religious wave, that has engulfed in its depths the very ends of space,—on whose snow-white crest shineth this Divine Form in the august glow of a heavenly presence,—if this be the effect brought about by our eager endeavours in pursuit of personal name, fame, or wealth, then,—without your or any others’ efforts this wave shall, in obedience to the insuperable Law of the Universe, soon die in the infinite watery womb of Time, never to rise again! But if, again, this tide, in accordance with the Will, and under the Divin<sup>e</sup> inspiration of the One Universal Mother, has begun to deluge the world with the flood of the unselfish love of a Great Man’s heart, then’—oh feeble man, what power do<sup>s</sup>

thou possess that thou shouldst thwart the onward progress of the Almighty Mother's Will?"

The hands of time may wash away into the Ganges the temple of Dakshineswar, and the monastery at Belur; they may break down the Homes of Service in Benares and Kankhal, and throw into oblivion the Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas, which has given to the world these volumes of the Life of the Swami Vivekananda and the Complete Works embodying his teachings. They may play havoc with the other centres which have been built for service and for meditation under the invocation of this New Redemption. They may even destroy those grandeurs in the way of spiritual expansion and revivals in other lines which are yet to come—for they shall come,—but time can never engulf that which is Truth and Realisation. For these are *in* and *of* Eternity. And underlying these is the Indomitable Spirit of Devotion, Self-sacrifice and Insight, which is the making of Saints, and against which nothing can stand! For this is of the Power of God!

And so the mission spreads and the message spreads. There is no holding back the Will of the Law. Nature Herself compels,—Nature, which is the Will of the Mother. And though fifteen years is but a small weight in the balance of time wherewith to judge the historic import of any great life,—still, in spite of this, the work of the Swami Vivekananda has already assumed gigantic proportions in the historic sense. For from Colombo to Al'nora and from Shillong to Bombay the burden of the message has been carried. The whole of India has become saturated with the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna and the Spirit of Vivekananda. In the Himalayas there is a centre of work and meditation, as also in Madras and Bangalore. At Benares, Kankhal, Brindavan and Allahabad, there are Homes of Service, and an orphanage at Murshidabad. In the distant America the Spirit is descending more and more. Many who have never seen him in the flesh are filled in their hearts with a great human love for him, and their spiritual understanding has been quickened and their souls have been set on fire. Truly, it is wonderful



and unparalleled. It is the Realisation revived. It is the Apocalyptic vision already well anticipated.

And yearly the festivals of Sri Ramakrishna and the Swami Vivekananda are celebrated, and yearly the number of those who participate is increased by hundreds and thousands. The monastery at Belur and the other centres of the Order are filled to overflowing with seething masses of devoted and admiring human beings. There is hardly standing-room for those that come. Verily, the Belur Math has become a living *Tirtha* to thousands upon thousands of the devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and they come of all castes, creeds and nationalities. For in the monastery live Their Spiritual Sons composing the *Saṅgha*, and there in the chapel is the Presence of the Master, and pervading all is the Spirit of the Chief Disciple who called into being a new type of monastic Brotherhood in this old land of Renunciation.

Vivekananda-Ramakrishna, Ramakrishna-Vivekananda,—it is all one. It is all Realisation, Illumination, the Constant Glorification of the Spirit, the Life lived which has never known death, the Resurrection of the Soul from the dream of personal and human incarnation back to That from which It came for the service of the world. The Voice that spoke by the shores of the lake of Galilee and on the battlefield of Kurukshetra and through the personality of Chaitanya of Nuddea, the same Voice which thundered through Sankara the commentaries of the Vedānta and sang the Hymn of Nirvāṇashatkam, the same Voice which uttered forth the enlightenment of Buddha, that Voice has been heard anew,—the Voice of Everlasting Truth which knows no Silence save that of the Eternal Insight.

Steep are the ascents of time. Long is history in the making. But the Church which is to come stands on the summit of the Near Future ; for the Gospel has already been preached ; the Prophecy has already been made, the Vision has been vouchsafed ; the Revelation has already come to hand, and the fulfilment of all these is only a question of time. The dawn is already breaking and the Eastern

sky is already tinged with the promise of a radiant glory. And the Austerity and the Illumination of the Man of Dakshineswar, and the spirit of self-sacrifice and Realisation of the Man of Hindusthan,—THE RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA—are embodied in the growing spiritual community which bears their name and incorporates their spirit. The victory has been achieved. The world has again seen a Crucifixion, not that of a Saviour, but that of *Kāminikāñchana*, the invading elements of "Lust and Gold." The Son of Man has been amongst men ; but he was not the Man of Sorrows ; he was the Man of Joyous Austerity and Beatitude as Sri Ramakrishna, the Man of Soaring Illumination with his Message of Strength and of Service and Renunciation as Vivekananda ! And the Gospel of the Future is the same as the Gospel of the Oracle of Delphi of old, "Man, know thyself !" and it is the still older Gospel of the Vedanta, "*Tattvamasi*," "That Thou art !" Verily the soul is the Supreme Self, and the mystic experience is the test. But how does the path of its realisation come to us with a deeper meaning and a newer and wider interpretation in the words of the Swami Vivekananda !—

"Each soul is potentially divine.

"The Goal is to manifest this divine within, by controlling nature, external and internal.

"Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one, or more, or all of these—and be free.

"This is the whole of religion. Doctrines and dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details."

Such is the Revelation ; such is the Illumination of this life. To them that *know*,—verily there is understanding. Outside the pale of this inspiration the world moves on the same as before. His work is seemingly sectarian, seemingly an organisation. But the Ramakrishna Mission is not the medium of proselytism ; it is the herald of Enlightenment. It makes no assertions ; it lays down no dogmas ; it is not bound by limitations in thought and ideas. It is FREE ; verily,

it is the Spirit of Freedom. It speaks of the Waters of Life as mentioned in the Works and Teachings of the Swami Vivekananda, the bearer of the Message of his Lord. Its ideals are the utmost service and the utmost renunciation, and it does what it says. It has the ideals which it has, because Sri Ramakrishna lived and because the Swami Vivekananda taught and prophesied. The chapters of their lives are complete. But as regards them their service unto mankind is eternal. Be they regarded as they may, their lives reveal the utmost struggle to realise God, the utmost realisation of the Reality, and the utmost service and self-sacrifice in bequeathing the fruits of that struggle and realisation unto all who should desire. And those who have already desired are counted by the thousands.

And Perfected Humanity is the Revelation of Divinity. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda were the spokesmen, verily the dual Incarnation of Divinity, because in them one sees fulfilled the transcendental powers and possibilities of human faculty. They did not believe; they laid claim to the surest knowledge of God and the soul, and their spiritual experiences, their character, their power and the burden of their teaching form the incontrovertible evidence.

Such is the thought of the Transcendent Resurrection. More than thought such is the spirit of this Resurrection. Such is the Reality of their Glorified Consciousness. Such is the power of their will, their Love, their all-enduring Self-Sacrifice. And the significance is borne in upon our minds by the prayer of Sri Ramakrishna :—"I shall cheerfully take birth again and again and suffer physical ills, and even live on sago diet, if but to help one single soul !" And it has been constantly verified in the life of the overwhelming service and enlightenment of the Swami Vivekananda, whose passionate utterance rings out over the story of his life, in that grand declaration of his :—"I shall gladly go into a hundred thousand hells if only I can help one single soul !"

Verily, the world has not seen another personality in whom were combined in a most charming manner so many goodly

virtues as—beauty of form, excellence of character, ready wit and humour, learning and eloquence, patriotism and sympathy for the poor and the distressed, power of interpreting Shastras and philosophy, burning passion for doing good to others, austerity and devotion, indomitable energy and spirit of meditation, conquest over lust, utter indifference to name, fame or possession, harmonious development of head and heart to perfection, versatile genius, profound insight and supreme realisation,—like that of the Swami Vivekananda ! The time has now come,—and we, his humble disciples and followers, though unworthy to bear his name, welcome one and all,—for the study of the life and mission of this great teacher of universal religion, this preacher of religious harmony and toleration, who was Sankara in wisdom, Buddha in love and sympathy to all beings, Christ in humility, Mahavira in faith and loyalty to his Lord, Narada in Bhakti, Arjuna in courage and *karmayoga*, Vyâsa in the knowledge of the Shastras, Shuka in purity, and a compeer alone of that Man of Infinite Realisation, his Divine Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa ! Arise from your slumbers, ye men and women, heirs of Immortality and Bliss, hearken to the call, feel the response of New Life, and awake in the Consciousness of the Highest !

Peace be to all ! Peace, Infinite Peace !

OM SHANTIH ! SHANTIH ! SHANTIH !



**VIVEKANANDA :**  
**THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE.**

## **By Way of Introduction.**

As the curtain falls on the final scene of the life of the Swami Vivekananda, that *Leela*, that great drama of his soul manifested on the stage of mortal life, one gathers, for a final time, in the general perspective of his career, glimpses of that Power and Character which he was. Though many traits thereof have already been dwelt upon in their places as occasion arose, and though the facts and episodes of his life are the most eloquent and touching illustrations of them, it is best to leave with the student of his life a general summary of those characteristics that made the Swami what he was, and also of his teachings and message to the world at large, and to his country in particular.

### CXXXIII.

#### THE DESCENT OF THE DIVINE MAN ON EARTH.

Great forces visiting the earth in human form are like avalanches from the Beyond. They reconstruct the whole body of society as they fulfil the destinies of the personality they embody. How often have the destinies of the world been the destinies of one individual! How often have the thought-forces and the soul-pressure of a whole world compressed themselves into the single, organic life of one great individual! How, also, have the millions not known this, though they lived in the very time of such unfoldment of race-personality! The ages, in their passing, cast the refracted light. The illumination, which was darkness at its time because of its own great intensity, can be seen as the Flame only in the lapsing of long historic periods: and then it dawns upon the human horizon as the improved age and the improved human outlook.

True, in the purely social sphere of human activity, one witnesses the assemblers of nations, the unifiers of national consciousness, the makers into one common world-history of the separate histories of many separate nations. One witnesses these in Alexander and Cæsar, Attila and Charlemagne, Akbar and Napoleon. But in how much more vastly true, potent and abiding a form does one witness the forces of the re-making of human life into new historic moulds in the characters of Rama, the ideal man, of Krishna, the spiritual Napoleon of ancient India, of Lao-tse, the supreme Chinese mystic and in Confucius, the great Chinese moralist! How much more vastly true is the vision in this respect when one pauses before the lives of leaders like Plato in thought, whose ideas ruled the world for ages, like Buddha who gave more than half the world a new perspective of life, like Christ and Mohammad, who gave radically new and far

higher ethical standards, not only to their own times, but to unborn generations of millions!

How limited has been the conception of the world-teacher! Supremely conscious only of action, the whole world except India has heretofore given the historic importance to the warrior and the king. But what as to him who is the maker of the warrior's thought, and what as to him who gives his intention unto a king's will?

Looking through the telescope of history it is seen how the historic worlds of past times have revolved about central purposes. Underlying every civilisation is a spiritual purpose,—but so coloured has it been by the living stream of emotion that one loses sight of the purpose in the turbulence of the emotional storm. The purpose has ever been the cherished treasure. For it the nations have fought valiantly while they lived, bequeathing it, before they went into that silence of the past into which all nations must go, as an heirloom, to a child,—to the young world of the future.

What has been the purpose of the nations? Their culture. And their culture,—of what has that been the outcome? Of their leading thought. And their leading thought is their manner of looking at life; and the manner in which a nation regards life is what must be realised as its religion, using that word in its broadest sense. It has its special and particular development, no doubt, but it runs throughout its entire history as the theme in a continuous musical composition, or, more truly, like a single shock through an electric battery, though the shock itself be diffused into various currents, supplying various agencies. And this leading thought is the distinction between one nation and another.

Enlarging the view through which humanity is studied, nations are lost sight of in the assemblage of historic times. One nation, touching upon another in either intellectual or emotional exchange,—be the character of the exchange what it may,—gives rise to new breeds of culture in which the stereotyped character of the separate culture is lost. Thus we see Greece and Persia, or rather West and East exchan-



ging the elements of their civilisation through the medium of Alexander ; again, in Cæsar we notice the same phenomena. But more is Buddha to be thanked than Alexander or Cæsar for such interchange of world-parts and world-experiences. For, while the others were only the instruments of action, he was the thinker. He thought, and Asia thought after him,—and, after all, what a nation thinks is more than what it does. What it does is the infinitesimal outcome of what it thinks. And India, amongst the nations, having seen deepest into life, has emphasised the truth that a man rises to perfection, not so much by the quality of his deeds, as by the quality of the thoughts he thinks. For the thought is the life of the deed. The silent thinker is the mover of a nation's will, of a world's will, and Luther and Voltaire,—what floods of action on the parts of millions welled up from the fountains of their thought ! And there are Rousseau and Thomas Paine. Through the concentration and direction of their thought, they became the inflaming spirits of two of the greatest upheavals of human society. How much has thought been disparaged ! How has action been enthroned at the cost of thought ! It is so because until now, man has seen much in action and less in thought. Therefore, what shall the world say of Buddha and Mohammad, of Christ and Confucius who have moved the world while they themselves retired into their own higher humanity, which man has called divinity ! How have these world-teachers been put into small and particular niches for reverence and understanding when they have shaped whole worlds of effort and made empires upon empires rise in their foot-marks ! Every great thought is an incentive to a world of action ; and one never knows how multiple or how myriad shall be the form. These have been the welders of East and West, of distant pasts with distant futures. Buddha plunged His spirit into Knowledge, and the Orient remodelled itself anew and influenced Western culture as history attests. New nations and new empires sprang up. Behold the India of Asoka and

behold the Buddhism of China and Japan! Behold how these were renewed in soul, thinking and feeling and living in new modes! And there is the Transfigured Christ! How have the ages of the West gathered in varied historic hue about Him who concerned Himself only with His Father! Truly, the world itself is an idealist, for it can only follow the weavers of dreams, the mystics and the saints. The warrior finds his inspiration in his culture and that is of the making of the sage. The dismemberment of the Roman Empire, the recasting of Europe into new nations was brought about by the force of the purer ethics of Christianity. And do we not see Christ, the Oriental, as the Master-Figure walking through the Mediæval Ages, just as we see Buddha, though long arrived at Nirvanā, still, in His realisation, the maker of the Indian Mediæval epoch? What of the Crusades and the Cathedrals, and the spirit that has come down to modern times in the story of Parsifal and the Holy Grail!

Behold the long procession of ideals and idealists that follow in the wake of the Man-God! That is the test of his power, the sure proof of his influence on the ages. Dante and Raphael, the long list of the early Christian martyrs, the heroes of the Crusades, the art that rests as priceless treasure in museums and basilicas, the soul of Saint Francis of Assisi,—these are a few of the works of Christ; aye, and they are greater than the raising of Lazarus from the dead. And behold that churning of thought which found its expression in the carved images of Buddha,—the master-pieces of Indian arts,—in the wonderful rock-hewn out caves of Ajanta and Elephanta, which are of the wonders of the world! Behold the rise of great learning and great universities, the birth of the commercial nexus between India and China and Asia Minor, the transfiguration of the whole Indian spirit in the times of Asoka the Great, the birth of the spirit of love and peace manifest everywhere in his time, to which his edicts, carved on rocks, which may still be seen, attest, the intellectual and moral conquest by

India of China and Japan, the Buddhist influence on ethical and religious thought embodied later in Christianity, and a nation of vegetarians in India,—these are amongst the few of the works of Buddha! And Mohammad with his Crescent en-scimitarred the Western world, making an empire of the spirit of a few barbarian tribes! Behold the stimulus to learning the Moorish and the Saracenic civilisation gave to Western life! Behold the galaxy of Persian poets and the poems of Omar Khayyam! Behold the Taj Mahal! All these speak of the greatness, of the loftiness, of the excellence and superior culture, which constitute the Mohammedan world, and of that depth which was Mohammad's.

Who, then, will dispute the greatness of the sages and seers? Truly are they the redeemers of the world, coming when the human mind needs a re-adjustment, or a re-imbuing and a heightening of higher consciousness, and touching that angle of time or nation which is fit and prepared. Verily, the redeemer of the world pushes open the gateways of Vision, and the whole world presses on to greater things.

No more is there the spirit of littleness. No more is there the provincial outlook. If there is still a shadow, even that shall be erased. Geographically man is master; he has conquered all distance, making the whole world one. East and West are now interchanging with intention and in peace, while in the past it was a deadly struggle. Now the interchange of life and thought is pacific. Heretofore, the message of the Masters found its way in spite of geographical obstacles. Now the world is no longer local. The whole human mind is consciously open to truth. Physically, science has made the world one. Psychologically, the whole world is expectant. How opportune the time for the spreading of a new gospel of illumination, the teaching of a new vision of life! How necessary, also, seeing how commercialism has broken down the individuality and romance of nations, and how the whole consciousness of man might be summed up as being under the sway of an overwhelming emotional materialism! How necessary

a new definition of man ! How necessary a new interpretation of human nature ! A new vision of life which shall dignify man's conception of himself is imperatively needed.

In the past there have been such imperative needs. The time, too, had been prepared. And when the time was ripe and the need most urgent, the salvation came ; another consciousness was instilled and the world bounded forth into nobler human realisation. Here and there individuals, becoming one with the spirit of that salvation, transcended the ordinary definition of life. Through a heightened vision and an expanded heart they bounded past all limitations, and the world called them saints.

Has such a salvation come to this present time ? Has the spiritual "Zeitgeist" been with us ? Has the new human impulse been given ? Who has been the modern redeemer ? Has he come, and who is he who having come has joined rank with the Buddhas and the Christs of old ? For these are of a consciousness and not of a name or even of a form. What has been the gospel ? What is its meaning ?

From the Orient come all the saviours of the world. The Star rises ever in the East. Here humanity was ushered into historic expression. Here has always been the world's international intellectual exchange. Therefore are the redeemers of the world born in the East.

There are those who believe that the "Zeitgeist" has already come.

O how have the ages dreamed of Man ! How have the millions struggled and suffered as the interpretation has drifted from one meaning to another ! Only the Buddha has seen and the Christ, and they who are of Their spirit,—and seeing have renounced. Yet, how strange that Their renunciation has meant the progress and salvation of the world ! How like a child's struggle is the feverish restlessness of the world ! This humanity knew, and knowing sought beatitude through knowledge, that redeeming knowledge knowing which man crosses the borders of life to the realisation of his own nature. And the teachings of the redeemers—for they are

not one but many—have thundered through the ages. But only the few have heard. Others must still play. And because they know that it is all the play of the Lord they bless them; and yet their hearts, for this reason, also, are floodgates of compassion. True, in their struggle to lead others beyond, they shoulder the burdens and the cross of a world's woe and of a world's wretched play.

That thought of renunciation has been with the present time. It has arisen out of India. It has put life and strength into the dry bones of India's most reverent philosophy which furnishes the highest outlook on life and the highest definition of man. That philosophy teaches: "See the divinity that is in thee and in all beings. Thou art that divinity. Dare know this! Then shalt thou be free. Then shalt thou be liberated from the dream for ever."

That philosophy has become incarnate in person. There have been those who have seen and heard; and the land of India has been the scene of his austerities and illumination; and the voice of that incarnation has reverberated across the seas to America and Europe. And it will continue to resound down the ages,—for when the need comes it shall speak physically as it did some years since,—even though that mighty voice has now been withdrawn. Mighty are the powers of Nature, but mightier than they are the thoughts of man,—and the thoughts of the divine man even the gods cannot fathom. For the divine man is of the very spirit of God. His is an unlimited consciousness of a purely spiritual entity, expressing itself in a human form. He is the born teacher. And there has been such a teacher amongst us.

O the ponderous depths and the everlasting heights of a consciousness of that intensity which defies the universe with all its magnitude! O the feeling within man that he is greater than the universe! Has such consciousness, such feeling ever been embodied? Aye, in Buddha—and he shook the world by the force of His personality. Again has it been embodied in this man of whom this is now written; and he

made his soul the under-current of the world, and he made his thought the aspiration of a world's mind.

What a gospel was that he preached!—that divinity was at the threshold of consciousness, that in the expansion of the latter the universe itself would be lost in the Soul's own immensity! Such a thunderbolt of thought had never rushed across the Western mind. Even in India where the echo of that supermundane message rings eternally, he was considered unique as a God-sent messenger of that gospel of insight, of strength and of the deification of man.

And what are to be the social changes following in the wake of this message! Wonderful are the potentialities because of the wonderful spirit of the message. Wonderful will be the nation whose progress will be conterminous with its spiritual insight. Wonderful will be the strength of the nation which will assimilate the strength embedded in that message of religious Equality, Fraternity and Freedom, of which he was the announcer. He was the arch-apostle of strength. Will there be a new culture the world over and the awakening of nations because he preached? There are signs with the birth of each era; and already even in this time so near the teaching, there are signals of wonders that are to be; and there are prophetic signs.

And those whose vision resides in the spirit of things have seen him clasp in illumination and in eternal bonds the seals of that book which is ever the Apocalypse, he having read it and finished in the reading that same final paragraph of the utmost realisation which Buddha and Christ and Ramakrishna and all of the elect have read, and then laying it aside, have attained eternal peace gazing upwards with such intensity of spirit that the body sank into death of itself, leaving the presence of the Masters seen only by them who burst all the bonds of illusion! For they, the Masters, are there and he too, in eternal peace and blessedness. Grand, indeed, and past all dreams is the self-revealed soul of man; one stands in the presence of such a one even now in the writing.

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## CXXXIV.

### AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE MAN.

The Swami Vivekananda was, at many times, a man of inconceivable attitude of thought, and often to all appearances a living paradox ; but beneath the surface of appearance he was clearly the living explanation of the spiritual life. And the understanding of the man, seemingly almost impossible, becomes almost simple when one remembers that he was a man of manifold realisation. Thus all the apparent paradoxes of his thought were reconciled by the greatness of his heart and by the consistencies of his emotional consciousness. He was intellectually like a great hammer mercilessly beating down the structures of complacent belief. Even with regard to his own mind he was an eternal iconoclast, always searching for and demanding a sounder, saner and a more comprehensive basis. He never allowed himself any intellectual ease. He peremptorily refused to be satisfied with a finality in thought and ideas which by their very nature connote limitation and imperfection. Therefore he was always on the watch-tower of thought, straining his personal vision to discern the contents of an ever-widening horizon. He was ever ready and bold enough to throw away the theories and explanations on life, soul and the cosmos offered by the Vedanta and other schools of Hindu philosophic thought, aye, his very realisations, if he could find another solution more satisfying and inclusive for his acceptance. If he dreaded anything more than bondage, it was the idea of putting a limit to the infinite conceptions of God and the endless ways of realising Him. To him, one who says that "God is *this* and *this* only," was the vilest blasphemer, and he repeatedly warned his disciples against such narrow thought. In his widest generalisations, all clinging to fondest individual beliefs which make for exclusion, would be swept away with a

merciless hand. Those who were below his own standing-place and who could not see because of their relative view-point, were often shocked by the words of authority that came from him, seemingly as the language of egotism or scepticism, but in reality of an impatient spirit always eager to destroy the edifices of mere belief and place in their stead the temples of unshakable vision. Now the Swami would turn over the fabric of devotional faith, now he would silence the scholastic arguments of the Jnanin, pitching one against the other, in a storm of contradiction and uncertainty. But there was a *reason*. He desired to *test* the bottom-rock foundation of the belief of those to whom he spoke. He would turn them out of their self-satisfied and stagnant spiritual condition and make them *think*. He was anxious that there should be no standing-still. Onwards and ever onwards must be the march of the soul, out of a lesser light, perhaps through the darkness of a temporary spiritual confusion, but surely in time into the radiance of a greater illumination.

It was a terrible training, and the Swami was known as "the terrible guru." As he was a preacher of worshipping the good for its own sake, he was likewise for worshipping the terrible for its own sake, and misery for its own sake. One who runs away from fear, he used to say, cannot be *Abhi*, the fearless, which is according to the Upanishads one of the attributes of the Self. One who cannot meet death face to face, is not fit for Immortality. One who has not passed through the hell of intellectual doubt, confusion and agony cannot reach the heaven of supreme insight and beatific vision. It is doubtful if any other teacher in the history of the world ever goaded his disciples to such a powerful self-exertion, in which agony combined with ecstasy in the increasing unfoldment of the spiritual vision. He created tempests of thought about him. One can almost hear him say, "None of that jelly-fish existence! Arise, awake! Better to be a true agnostic than a man who blinds himself in the determination not to see beyond a certain point for fear of getting unsettled! A fanatic's faith is the worst of all types



of spiritual blindness, the greatest of all superstitions!" Therefore, the Swami literally threw his disciples, and sometimes, indeed, even his Gurubhais—into the open sea of personal effort, far removed from the shores of authority; and spiritually speaking, it was a question of sink or swim. He counted those as unworthy of a great trust who could not stand on their own feet, who constantly asked for support and protection, having no faith in themselves, and who had built their faith on the sands of a sentimental self-satisfaction. He wanted to know the worth of a man and for that reason he would pound away at the fortress of his soul, harass all his convictions and *find him out*. He knew instinctively that those who might be *shaken* in their faith, had never known *real* conviction. He was outspoken himself and even would express his own doubts at any time before any one.

And for those who defied him he had great respect, as in the instance of Girish Babu, the man of great faith, who would speak out with the fire of his soul at the end of some lengthy discussion, saying, "What do I care for all your philosophic arguments! I know! My faith is surest knowledge, for it illumines my heart and strengthens my soul!" This would delight the Swami. He revered such vital realisation. He rejoiced to try his strength with one worthy of his steel, opposing him tooth and nail. After a furious tempest of light and darkness of thought, which would be hurled upon Girish Babu by the Swami, though under a vigorous protest from him, he would descend from the icy mountain-tops of pure thought down to the warm valley of spiritual perception. He would descend from thought to feeling. He would lay aside the scourging whips of thought and be himself, the monk, the devotee, but always the Jnani at heart.

Sometimes he would rant against Sri Ramakrishna himself, saying, "My whole life has been ruined by a mad man's teaching." He would say that worship is all nonsense, that no one can be a devotee who has not got something wrong with his head, and so on. But when he saw the effect of his words as they stupefied or perplexed his listeners, he

would come out of those moods during which he felt a peculiar super-exaltation of personality. It was not that for one moment he disbelieved either in Sri Ramakrishna or in worship and devotion. He could, indeed, criticise his Guru or an Avatara without losing the least particle of his unsurpassed love and reverence for him,—a most uncommon phenomenon with the devotees of the Lord. He had once written in a fit of supreme passion a letter of flaming words glorifying his Master and rating one of the monks when the latter's faith in Sri Ramakrishna wavered. Then, at other times also he would speak of the Master, as the greatest of the Saviours of the world. And in a letter to a disciple one reads the opening words, in a Sloka : "Constant salutation be to Sri Ramakrishna, the Free, the Ishvara, the Shiva form, by whose power we and the whole world are blessed !"

In these sublime moments of criticism he was wandering near the region of the Absolute, beyond all personality, beyond all worship. Sometimes he would denounce philosophy as mere intellectual abstractions, calling upon his listeners to bear in mind that God could be realised only through the heart. Again at other times he would point out that without the culture of philosophy nothing of religion would be left except diabolical fanaticism and sentimental nonsense ! Those to whom he spoke thus, would wince under his fierce denunciation. Some would become Bhaktas. That was because they had been on the wrong path before. Some were confirmed in their habit of philosophical study and culture. But in the case of both there would come an expansion of vision and a partial interchange of ideals in harmony with their nature. When he visited the Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas he became almost a fury on discovering that some of the inmates had been conducting external worship of Sri Ramakrishna when he intended to make that centre a purely Advaita monastery. He was afraid lest the performance of external worship with the ever increasing paraphernalia of rituals and ceremonies, predominate in the course of time over the principles and practice of the Advaita for which the Ashrama was founded,

He foresaw the danger to the training of pure Advaitins in an atmosphere of Dualistic worship, and hence expressed his strong disapproval of the course allowed, in contravention to the scope and ideal of the Asnrama formulated by himself at the time of its inception (*vide* vol. III, page 341). After a while, however, he turned and said wonderful things of the Master.

This strange paradox had a great meaning. It was because he wanted to include *all* religious ideals in his life's work, even as Sri Ramakrishna had done. He wanted each to *realise* the particular religious ideal for which he was fit having at the same time a full knowledge of the strong and weak points of his own position and those of others, so that they might not drift into fanaticism. And for this reason, in his forceful presentation of them he spared no words or theories. And he would neither spare himself. He turned everything upside down. He analysed and criticised everything at various times and to various disciples. There was only one point at which he stopped—REALISATION. Wheresoever he saw the living truth, the actual personal experience, he stood in reverence and in awe. The grandeur of real insight, the sublimity of true realisation—these were his own personal characteristics and the true basis of all his criticism. He had *realised*, he *saw*, he *knew*. Everything pertaining to the soul and the spiritual consciousness of the disciple, he knew, required constant discrimination and readjustment, and his very soul was a demon in its delight in breaking the fabric of an indolent, hypocritical, or a conceited faith. This was the secret of all the seeming paradoxes of his thoughts. He desired that all should rise, each in his own way and by his own path, to the vision of the unity in diversity. He demanded of his disciples the faith which removes mountains and the spiritual consciousness which overlaps the boundaries of sects and creeds and personal and racial instincts in its contents, leading to the end of dreams.

Nothing illustrates the nature of the Swami's personality

better than the incident narrated in the chapter entitled, "The Master in Bhâva Samâdhi." Well has it been said by one of the monks to a Western disciple, "Vivekananda was a man of multiple personality. When you have got what you want from him, go and *realise* it. Otherwise he will confuse you." But then, he was also a man of wonderful reconciliation of conflicting views. No doubt, to the outside world, the Swami Vivekananda will ever remain a standing paradox, undefinable and incomprehensible, as his Master had said of him.

What a man he was ! What divinity shone forth through him !



## CXXXV.

### THE MONK.

Sri Ramakrishna was accustomed to speak of his chief disciple in an endearing way as "my Suka," meaning the great sage, Sukadeva, and say that he was a born Brahmanjñāni. He would add that he was a born monk as well, pure and spotless, untouched by worldliness, for even from his very boyhood the Swami revealed himself as such in the heart of his heart. Did not Sri Ramakrishna pray to the Divine Mother to send him someone with whom he could find satisfaction in talking, as his lips burnt, he said, by talking with worldly-minded people? And he felt his prayer answered when he met the boy Noren, as the Swami then was.

O the memories of those wondrous days in Dakshineswar and Cossipur and in the monastery at Baranagore ! O the ecstasy and the spiritual fervour of those times ! Can time itself engulf those eternal hours of ecstatic prayer and exaltation which the Swami, as the Parivrājika, passed ! What shall the monk care for the world ? He who has seen the Reality cares nothing for the attraction of lust and gold. The monk who has possessed himself of the Riches of the Infinite cares nothing for all the joys and treasures of the world, which are even as dust and ashes to him. Great is the world ; great is the life of the righteous householder ; great are the civic ideals ; verily, the progress and the revelations of society are sublime. But in comparison with the monastic life these shine as the stars before the sun. The monastic life is in and of the Divine Life ; and the spirit dwelling within it is verily the Lord Himself. This is the life of the freedom of the soul, the life of the breaking of all bonds, the life of the intense love for God, which was the Swami Vivekananda's. The wealth of the world, its pomp, its power, its attractions cannot deceive the monk. They never

deceived the Swami Vivekananda. In the midst of the surroundings and opportunities of princes, it was more and more the monk that stood revealed in him. Moving in the midst of luxuries, as he had to do in the West, he never for one moment forgot that he was the Monk, that he was the disciple of the Man of Renunciation ; and he looked back upon his Parivrajika days with a passion akin to that of a lover. His was constantly the life of the Awakened Soul to which the world was but a name, and work as an accident, or as the discharging of his debt to his divine Master. Renunciation was the keynote of his life. His Vairāgyam has no parallel except in the great Achāryas and Avatāras of bygone India. The only true picture of him is in the gerrua, and this represents him as he was, the man with super-social interests, who stood at all times upon the borderlands of the Highest Revelation, who, with a simple touch or a wish, or by his mere presence could destroy the Māyā in a disciple's heart. His very presence wrought in the disciple a certain silent change unawares. It was often in this way, as says the Sister Nivedita, "one's whole attitude to things was reversed ; one took fire, as it were, with a given idea ; or one suddenly found that a whole habit of thought had left one, and a new outlook grown up in its place, without the interchange of a single word on the subject. It seemed as if a thing had passed beyond the realm of discussion, and knowledge had grown, by the mere fact of nearness to him. It was in this way that questions of taste and value became indifferent. It was in this way that the longing for renunciation was lighted, like a devouring flame, in the hearts of those about him." It is the picture of him as the saint and the prophet in whose heart the Supreme Consciousness was always present, that the disciples cherish and adore. The very thought of him reminds one that everything is the sowing of wild oats compared with the struggle for the Highest Truth. A prophetic atmosphere lingered about him, verily, the holiness of a sanctuary.

Though he was a gigantic worker with endless plans of saving mankind in all stations of life, in his heart he was free.

He cared nothing for name, or fame, or success, or money wherewith to build up even the structure of his work. On many occasions, even when he worked, or even when he was the patriot and Indian, it would seem as if he would at any time throw off everything and run away into some cave where in the stillness he could meditate. As once stated, he would have liked, he said, to meet death lying on a ledge of cool rock in the Himalayas, listening to the roaring of the waterfall, whose music spelled to his spiritual imagination the notes of highest freedom and reality—"Hara! Hara! Vyom! Vyom!"

The heart of the Swami was given over completely to the Lord. The Mother alone concerned him, and his Master, between Whom he saw no difference. Thinking of Sri Ramakrishna he would oftentimes recite the *Gurustava* in which occurs the Sloka, "The Guru is Brahmā, the Guru is Vishnu, the Guru is Deva Maheswara. Verily the Guru is Para-Brahman. Unto Him, the Guru, my salutations!" He was always the Boy of Dakshineswar, untutored in the intricate ways of the world, the monk filled with a radiant innocence, who had "vomited out" the pleasures of the senses and who loathed their vulgarity. Oftentimes he was as a child, crying with longing for the cessation of all dreams and to have the Book of Experience closed for him so that he might awaken in the Mother's arms. He had little use for the world himself. His soul had turned page after page of the Book of Experience only to find that there was nothing in it, after all. He was a man of such a *passionate purity* that he could associate with all peoples and live on any food regarded as "forbidden" or "tainted", and yet remain untarnished, for he was, as his Master had said, "the roaring fire of spirituality." About him were the lights of Illumination and the spirit of Eternal Meditation. For him the monastic life was solemn and sublime; and sometimes when he himself revealed its grandeur, the gateways of vision were thrown open by his thought and he stood before his fellow-monks and disciples as *transfigured*. Through the bondages of the body which he wore, they often

saw the world-shaking dance of the Spirit within. Verily they saw,—the Radiance of Shiva.

He had a wonderful pride in that he was a monk. In these days of materialism when monasticism is either ignorantly misunderstood or deliberately misinterpreted, he stood forth on the highways of the world challenging all passers-by as to their right to criticise. He held that the one message of all religions lay in the call to renunciation. He extolled celibacy; he denounced the prevailing tendency to follow the life of the senses. He looked upon the latter as one looks upon a rotten corpse covered with roses, or a filthy sore concealed by a cloth of gold. He warned his disciples again and again, with all the fire of his soul, to cling to the vow of Sannyâsa as a miser clings to his hoarded treasure. He himself was rigid in this respect, believing that without purity and renunciation the higher spiritual life was impossible. He held that the energy of sex impulse could be transmuted into spiritual power of the highest order. True, he was himself a man who often played with fire. While in the West, temptation was to his right and left, before, behind and everywhere. Opportunities were rampant and unique. But the man was unique also. He was proof against all allurements of the flesh and the devil. Those who came to tempt him, returned as disciples with changed out-look on life, or with a heart full of bewilderment saying, "Who ever saw a man like this to whom women and money mean nothing?" Sri Ramakrishna had said, "*Noren can never succumb to lust. Even if he desired to deviate from his monastic vow for a single moment the Mother Herself would throw him back!*" The Swami never met a woman save as mother, sister or a daughter. Purity was instinct with him. The struggling flame of chastity had long become the leaping flame of purity. His mind moved clock-work-like in the ways of the highest life. He hated sex-consciousness as he hated poison. He hated all exaggerated sentiment and the unrestrained admiration for the physical aspect of things. By some he was accused



of dressing well. But that was merely out of regard for the society in which he had to move, and on lecture platforms. Nothing pleased him more than to throw away his cuffs and collars, his turban and long robe, his shoes and socks, and go about in *kaupina* or a piece of lion-cloth as he did in the Math and other places in India. He was, personally, most indifferent with regard to his clothing and appearance. At times in America, he would cry out in agony for having had to "defile" himself with the touching of money for the sake of his work, and to conform himself to social conventionalities, and would passionately pray for deliverance from such "terrible bondage."

Swami Vivekananda was a monk, true, with a resurrecting message to society, but he himself was not of it. If he preached the social aspect of the Sanatana Dharma, and pointed out that the ideal state of society should have its basis and structure on the principles of the Vedānta,—he intensified the vision of monasticism, both in India and in the West a thousandfold more than it had been known before. In this respect he showed himself to belong to the order of those Rishis who gave laws to society, whilst they themselves remained steadfast in the meditative life. In the monastic vision his soul soared above the world, beyond all laws and limitations, making its abode in the Eternal. He was a monk in an uncompromising sense. He lived in the silence of his soul, occupied with the thought of his Guru and the Mother of the universe, though the message which he uttered was tumultuous with vibrating strength to the Indian consciousness. He often turned aside, seeking the solitude and the grand aloofness of the "inner life." He was more proud of his *gerrua* than if he had worn the purple garments of a king. Indeed, he said, "India will be raised by the power of the beggar's bowl." And it is not strange that in the begging-bowl which he carried from door to door bearing his message, India should have found priceless treasure wherewith to redeem her ancient greatness and power. Beggar-monk though he was, in his writings and speeches he has left unto the Indian Future the ransom of a nation's life.

Had the Swami Vivekananda not been a true monk, his message would have been worthless, and his work a mere mushroom growth to die to-morrow. He was a monk and preacher of the type of Sankaracharya,—pure, radiant, luminously intelligent and possessed of the Knowledge of Brahman. He was the singer of sacred and inspiring songs calling unto nations for a retreat from *Kama-Kanchana* to the Presence of God. One cannot think of him save as the monk. His very countenance spoke volumes as to the glory and the spiritual power of *Tyaga*. Here and there he came forth with a message to society, but his *gurubhaiṣ* and disciples always think of him as the monk of monks, the man of Realisation, the awakener of souls, the complement of Sri Ramakrishna, and the bearer of the Message of his Master, which is the Message of India and of the Sanatana Dharma to herself and to the rest of the world. The *gerrua*, the deep, inquiring solemn look within his eyes, the lineaments of his countenance constantly suggesting the highest meditation, the gentle loftiness and child-like simplicity of his personality, his freedom with the monks, the hours of prayer and song, his purity and insight, his austerity and reserve, his room and his silence, his eloquence and his work, his intuitive penetration into the essence of things, and every detail of his wonderful life, revealed him, in very truth, to be the Prince of Monks. And in the West he revealed himself on all occasions as the monk, denouncing like another Savonarola the claptrap framework, the ravenous greed and lust and wolfish commercial rapacity of so-called civilisation, announcing with clarion voice the message of the Modern Gospel, calling for a retreat from the senses and keeping the lights of his love for India, for his Master and for the Mother of the Universe, burning always as a bright flame on the altar of his life.

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## CXXXVI.

### THE ASCETIC AND YOGI.

That the Swami Vivekananda was an ascetic goes without saying. He was an ascetic in a larger definition than the word is ordinarily conceived of to mean. With him asceticism was not a constant and conscious striving, but a natural state. He had his self constantly and instinctively under command. He had undergone a severe ascetic discipline at the Feet of Sri Ramakrishna, and he fully developed it in the days at Baranagore and when he was the itinerant monk. With him the ascetic life was the constant demonstration of *conquest* over the sense propensities, which makes a perfected monk ; and he *was* that. Purity with him included not only the triumph of chastity but the fulfilment of the Dharma in every respect. Anything which blights the heart and distorts the spiritual vision was to him Adharma. It was thus that he spoke of pride, anger, hatred and covetousness in any form as impurity, and to the ethics of social life he added the strenuous morality of the monk, which was nothing short of the obliterating of even a shadow of "Lust and Gold." All desire must be made subservient to the highest purpose. The true teacher must radiate purity, for in him all signs of struggle must have ended.

So thoroughly was the Swami's mind saturated with ascetic ideas that he could not tolerate even artistic excitement or any overflow of the senses, which he regarded as vulgar. Ever to be the witness of the changing panorama of life, and to be always recollected in soul in the presence of the Beautiful and Sublime, that was his ideal. "See it from within," he would say. "Behold Beauty through the spiritual perspective with the idea of sex and sense totally eradicated. Stand aside! Be the witness! Do not seek to possess! And knowing that real beauty is subjective,

being in the vision of the seer, he would say in certain moments of exaltation, "It is I who give beauty to all this. If this external is so beautiful, how much more beautiful is the *Reality* behind! And 'Thou art That'!"

The Swami's conception of the ascetic life did not consist in repelling or being repelled; it did not express itself in an aversion for what is beautiful and pleasant to the senses but in a *deification* of all this. He did not denounce nature. But he did say, "Not the Soul for Nature, but the Nature for the Soul!" Herein lies his whole interpretation of asceticism, which consisted in a discipline of the mind, not in a crucifixion of the flesh. He never denounced "Woman", because he knew that sex was in the mind and not external; therefore, instead of avoiding woman he refrained from *thinking* evil. He made the whole matter of overcoming temptation entirely a subjective process; and he developed such a vigilance over his nature that even if the slightest impure thought entered the mind, the mind itself would give itself a blow, as it were. Indeed, his asceticism was *instinctive*. To one possessed of the Swami's temperament, the ascetic habit had moulded into shape his spiritual consciousness. To him, the constant dwelling on the divine, of itself implied the blotting out of all images of sense. Dwelling constantly in the Light, he had not to struggle with the Darkness. In this he was far distinct from the type of the saint whose life is one unintermittent warfare with the rebellious nature of the beast within. Did the forces of evil or temptation assail his soul at any time, one uprising of his spiritual consciousness was sufficient to vanquish them. Above all things he was *strong* spiritually. For this reason he was not *afraid* of the world or of worldly people. He took possession of them with a fearlessness that confounded many of his worldly-wise critics, for in the fulness of youth he mixed freely with all classes and characters and both sexes, but with a complete Self-possession. To use his own language, at twenty he was a most unsympathetic and uncompromising fanatic who would not walk on the theatre

side of the streets of Calcutta. He would either fight with or fly from evil. But by thirty-three, he realised that evil was a delusion and hence could not blame or condemn anybody, for he saw the Lord Himself in every being. "At thirty-three," he wrote to a friend, "I feel I could live in the same house with prostitutes and never would think of saying a word of reproach to them." His mental make-up was pre-eminently that of an ascetic and a man of meditation. Hidden though it was behind the exterior of a man of action, it was ever struggling to force itself out into expression. This habit he had to control for the sake of giving his message to the world. Writes the Sister Nivedita :—

He never appeared to be practising austerity, but his whole life was a concentration so profound that to anyone else, it would have been the most terrible asceticism. The difficulty with which he would stop the momentum that would carry him into meditation had been seen by his American friends, in the early days of his life in that country of rail-roads and tramways and complicated engagement-lists... At first, his lapses into the depths of thought, when people were perhaps waiting for him at the other end of the journey, caused him much embarrassment....

"Apart altogether, however, from meditation, he was constantly, always, losing himself in thought. In the midst of the chatter and fun of society one would notice the eyes grow still, and the breath come at longer and longer intervals ; the pause ; and then the gradual return. His friends knew these things and provided for them. If he walked into the house to pay a call, and forgot to speak ; or if he was found in a room, in silence, no one disturbed him, though he would sometimes rise and render assistance to the intruder, without breaking his silence. Thus his interest lay within and not without."

What a Yogi he was ! His life was one of interminable concentration, the hundredth part of which would have wearied any ascetic in the monastic life. He had undergone the most austere religious practices and had lost himself in the Ocean of the Higher Consciousness. He could in any environment empower his will with such a dynamic vitality that the whole psychical and physical personality responded instantaneously. What would ordinarily take the Hatha Yogi or the Raja Yogi years of effort in the taming

of the body and the mind he could accomplish spontaneously. His mind was so perfectly under his own control that he could at any moment plunge himself into a mood of sublime concentration and remain at will without the least possibility of distraction and unexpected return to the sense plane. His command over the self was so paramount that he could, at will, transcend thought itself or direct it into any channel. His body was as subservient to his mind as the latter was to his will. That is the state of perfection in Yoga when the mind is not scattered by the heaviest winds of passion; and then, when it is focussed to a certain purpose, its power becomes almost omnipotent in nature. And such concentration, such power of focussing the will, comes only when one is able to overcome and forget the body consciousness. It is for this purpose that Yoga is practised and asceticism and austerities are undergone. This is the ideal of all the Indian ascetics. The sole business of Yoga is will-development and mind-culture of the above nature. One as it were hammers thought into certain definite shapes and drives the will to run into certain currents of expression—and the aim is not only the making of character, but the exaltation of personality. The attainment of these was the whole secret of the immense power wielded by the Swami over men and women everywhere, and the air of authority and assuredness that he had about him and which expressed itself in all his deeds and words. So dominant was his mood over others that he could so charge his environment with it that, for example, when he observed a day of fast, those about him found that during that time the very thought of food repelled them. The same held true of purity. It was impossible in his presence to think impure thoughts. In meditating with him one would be caught up into the state of concentration without effort, so powerful were the thought-currents emanating from him. Sometimes, while teaching others to meditate he would be lost in Samadhi himself. And in America he had to restrain himself constantly from merging in the super-conscious state. Oftentimes so intensely

abstracted in thought he would be as to be quite oblivious of those about him. At any moment he could tear off the mask of fun or relaxation or even of philosophy and stand before his disciples and friends as the throbbing, living Personification of spirituality. He could make one see the Reality of religion. He could make one perceive the psychic workings of Yoga. All that was required was *to be himself*, to put aside the veils of ordinary consciousness and to manifest himself in the all-revealing glory of the highest Consciousness. Indeed, he was the ascetic of ascetics, the Yogi of Yogis, the Man of Beatific Vision.

Through the perspective of his personality one becomes aware of the severity of his devotional practices, the days and hours spent in meditation and Yoga, and the refraining from food and sleep in a prolonged spiritual watch. One realises the intense agony of soul and forlornness in the constant warfare with the internal nature and the meaning of his resolves to take recourse to extreme steps in the mortification of the body, during his Sadhana state. How many times did he not think of ending his life by starvation if the highest realisation was not reached ! And there was one time, writes the Sister Nivedita, when for twenty-five days he allowed himself only half-an-hour's sleep in twenty-four hours, and from that half-hour he awoke himself ! As the background of his personality one saw the Dhuni fires of Dakshineswar and Cossipur, and the glaring lights of the Baranagore burning-ghat whither he used to go for Sadhana at night, and the lonely places by the riverside, or in far-off mountains. And in the shifting phases of his life one would see the years upon years of asceticism of the Master, in those of the Baranagore monastery or those of his own Parivrajaka days ; and one would realise the depths of his asceticism when he said, "I am a man who has met starvation face to face for fourteen years of life, and have not known what to eat the next day or where to sleep, a man who dared to live where the thermometer registered thirty degrees below zero, almost without clothes." And

the whole meaning of asceticism dawned on the hearer's mind; and the words of Jesus the Christ that one should take no thought of the morrow became luminous, and the great desire rose in the hearts of his devotees to plunge with him into the great freedom of the monastic life, to meet life in all its uncertainties with pleasure, to roam as an itinerant monk beneath the silent stars, or to dwell in forest caves, or meditate at dawn or eventide by the Ganges side and live constantly in the Vision of the Lord.





## CXXXVII.

### THE TEACHER AND THE LEADER.

The real *Guru* is one in a million. Rare, indeed, are the teachers of the soul, those who lead the disciples from out of the ways of ignorance into knowledge. As a *Guru* the Swami Vivekananda was indeed wonderful. He was a teacher who not only practised what he taught, but who was verily the teaching incarnate. The relationship between the *Guru* and the disciple has all the sweetness, the tenderness, the rapture, the blessedness, the sense of oneness and the divine which is manifested in the greatest of human loves. It in no way binds or seeks to possess. Its nature is to give, and to give without seeking return. The real *Guru* gives *all* to the disciple unreservedly. This sort of *Guru* was Vivekananda.

No words can paint the love which the Swami Vivekananda had for his numerous disciples. He made no distinction amongst them, whether they were rich or poor, high or low, learned or ignorant, young or old, men or women. If he did, it was always in favour of those that were the less privileged in position. But such was the beauty of it that each one thought that he or she was one of the most favoured ones. Did he accept them spiritually, he loved them humanly as well. Once he gave himself to them it was for ever. He would stand by anyone of them unto death! He was accustomed to quote the Hindu proverb in illustrating the irrevocable moral obligation between *Guru* and disciple: "The tusks of the elephant come out, but they never go back, Even so are the words of a MAN!" Or he would say with the deepest spiritual emotion, "I will give everything I have of the best to you, everything that I am! If I have any spiritual realisation, it is yours. I will be with you **FOR-EVER!** If need be, I shall go through a thousand deaths

and a thousand hells for you!" And the Hindu believes that the *Guru* has to be born again and again until the disciple has attained liberation. It mattered not to the Swami whether the one desiring to be his disciple was deserving or not, so long as one came with a sincere and earnest spirit. It mattered not to him whether such a one should even give up the teaching or desert him personally, or even be his violent opponent later on. This accounts for the several desertions from the ranks of his Western disciples. But he knew these to be the will of the Mother, who had had Her work done by them so far and so long as it was needed. They had played their part in the work as much as they were destined to do. So there was no bitterness in his mind about it all. He knew he had given them of his very best, and that it was their *karma* to determine if they could assimilate his teachings or not. Anyhow he rested in the firm assurance that if they had done so even to a small degree, it would bring them nothing but good. Or he would see in his deepest vision that *he* was not *their* real *Guru*. So there were neither hopes nor regrets. The ideal *Guru* cannot turn back upon the disciple, even though the latter curse or injure him. Such was the Swami.

The very personality of the man or, better said, his realisation was dominant,—in this relationship. His mere presence, even his silence was as effective as his most eloquent utterances. He and his Master were of the type which actually *transmitted* spirituality. With a glance, or with a gesture he would throw a world of light and revelation, for he actually visualised spiritual statement and ideas. Where others would talk of ways and means he knew how to light a fire. Where others gave directions, he would show the thing itself. He was a great flame of spiritual illumination, and those who came near could not help absorbing the light. There were many who had their lives transformed from sin to saintliness, or from vicious and narrow bigotry and prejudices to broad-mindedness. All the burning grandeur of his personality was as the perspective

through which they saw the facts and visions of the spiritual world. His whole personality, his thought, his heart, his body, his love, his realisation were spent unremittingly and unreservedly in the task of training his disciples. He regarded all of them as his very own, and for many he felt a real responsibility even in their domestic or personal affairs. His disciples knew the manner in which he loved them and the measure of the responsibility which he felt for them. And they returned that love; they relieved the burden of his responsibility in fulfilling each and every wish of his heart. Some were devoted to his philosophy, others to his work, whilst still others in attending to his physical needs and comforts with untiring devotion, or in serving and helping him and his cause in various other ways.

The Swami was remarkable in the freedom which he accorded to his disciples. He believed in freedom even to the seemingly paradoxical extent that he would not even aid them at times in their struggle at clearness of perception. They must work out their own problems. They must think for themselves and find out for themselves. He knew that it was better to make mistakes in an effort to understand than to believe without knowing 'Why'! That would establish self-confidence in them; and if Vivekananda believed in anything it was in self-confidence. Of course, the majority of his disciples were not confronted with intellectual problems and perplexities as he had been in the days of his life-in-the-making. His illumination was an invaluable heritage to them, and they accepted him in love and in faith. It was especially the Western disciples who had to "find their way" into Hinduism. Naturally; for, bounded with the pre-suppositions of Western culture and learning, they had a long array of difficulties to overcome. That they came to understand was because his personality breathed forth, as it were, the power of understanding and insight, and because, both consciously and unconsciously, he *transmitted* spirituality. Whether in religion, in philosophical thought, in social matters, or in personal life, he

himself believed in and demanded freedom, and he gave the same liberty to all others. He would discourage any *dependence* on their part even to him. His first and last advice was, "Stand on your own feet!" He became downright emphatic on this point, believing that ignorance, thirst for name, fame and power, and spiritual conceit often lurk behind the craving for authority. He was singularly devoid of such weaknesses. He could not be an authority to anyone. In his letters from America to his *gurunbhai*s and Indian disciples he wrote asking them to remember, that he wanted to be "a voice without a form", that they must not look up to him, but look to themselves. They must try to think, he wrote, as if 'Swamiji' was dead and gone and they had to work without him. Moreover, they must work for the *principles* he preached, and not in their zeal put the *person* foremost, either be it himself or even his Master. He pointed out as a warning, that the disciples of all the prophets had always inextricably mixed up the ideas of the Master with the *person*, and at last killed the ideas for the *person*.

He repeatedly cautioned his disciples not to try to rule over others. Those who were to take charge of the different centres and works of the Movement must do so "not as a *leader*, but as a *servant*", for, "the least show of leading destroys everything by rousing jealousy." As for himself he was, in very truth, a *born* leader. From his boyhood to the last day of his life, in whatever position he might have been placed, he found himself leading men everywhere; he found that leadership was thrust upon him without his seeking, or rather in spite of his avoiding it. Standing in the monastery-grounds or in the parlours of Western residences,—he was always the Master, the teacher. Well has it been said by an Englishman who knew him well, "The Swami's genius lay in his dignity. It was nothing short of royal!" And an English lady who travelled with him to England and America said, "He never met any foreigner save as the Master!"

But, on the other hand, the faculty of personal service and of self-sacrifice for those who looked up to him, was also instinctively ingrained in his nature even from his very boyhood, as the many acts of that period testify. And in his youth and later days, if his *gurubhais* and disciples abandoned themselves to him, he more than abandoned himself to them, aye, sacrificed himself for them. Many were the occasions, in the years following the passing of his Master, when all his firm resolve for performing austere *sadhanas* in the Himalayas or in some lonely retreat elsewhere, aloof from the world, was swept away by seeing or hearing that a Brother-monk was lying ill, as was the case with the Swami Yogananda in Allahabad, the Swamis Abhedananda and Sadananda in Hrishikesh, and the Swami Akhandananda in the Himalayas. For the latter he begged from door to door at Dehra Dun, seeking for a shelter and proper diet for him. And when he found it advisable to take Sadananda down to the plains for treatment and nourishing food, he himself carried on his shoulder his disciple's bundle of clothes and blankets and his *shoes* ! For them he would do anything,—even steal, as he said once, in his intense mood. He was a slave of Sri Ramakrishna, to whom his body and soul were sold for ever, and hence his spiritual children who were left to his keeping by the Master were objects of his constant care and service. He would serve them as a slave, come heaven or hell, freedom or bondage ! Those were his very words, and they were proved by his actions.

And his attitude to disciples was also one of constant care and self-sacrifice. This was the secret of their implicit love and allegiance to him, and of the unbounded power that he unconsciously exercised over them all. "The test, the real test of a leader," he said once, "lies not in his power of organisation, or in his setting forth high and original ideas and methods of their realisation, but in holding widely different people together, along the line of their common sympathies. And this is done by him unconsciously,

and not by trying." And no leader in the history of the world had the occasion of doing so as the Swami who knitted together in a bond of common sympathies and aspirations a vast number of disciples of all ranks, sects and nationalities bearing the most divergent characters and temperaments, all looking up to him as their blessed and beloved Master.

Like the true father, *guru* and leader that he was, he could brook defeat from none except his disciples, his spiritual children. He wished them even to outshine him, to do greater things than he had been able to accomplish. In a letter to a disciple he wrote: "I want each one of my children to be a hundred times greater than I could ever be. Everyone of you must be a giant—*must*, that is my word." And he sincerely believed that they were capable of being that, if only they had faith in themselves, and faith in their *Guru* unto death. He had unbounded faith in them. He would send them out as his ships, as it were, on the great sea of experience; and intuitively he knew that however wild the winds and waves might be, they were sure to reach the haven on the other shore. He made them his very own *in the sense of a personal possession* so that he might *experiment* with them in his work and in his message, and transmit spirituality to them which is possible only when the *Guru* possesses the disciple's soul. His stern questions, noted previously, to one about to receive *sannyas* at his hands illustrate the character of the discipleship he demanded. Of course he never availed himself of such abandonment to his personality on the part of his disciples to serve any personal ends. Only he wanted to test them, and to impress upon them the need of cultivating the instinct for obedience and loyalty in the life of discipleship. And he was always ready to be of any help and service to them. They had constant accession to his personality. He spoke freely with all of them with equal affection, and regarded each one of them, however humble and insignificant he might seem to be, as indispensable to him and for his work. Some he really *hammered* into shape. He felt free to do as he liked with them in the training which he

gave them for the good of their souls. Oftentimes they feared his dread outspokenness, but *always* they loved him. He felt concerning them, even as Sri-Ramakrishna had felt concerning him. The result of it all was, that everyone of his intimate disciples has fulfilled a certain mission. Some, it may be, only to lead the simple life of prayer and meditation, whilst others, as time has revealed, were to found institutions, or to become masters in literature and thought, or powerful preachers and teachers of religion ; or again others, to nurse the sick, or help the poor, and so on. Whatever the outcome, the work was only *by the way*. In the heart of all alike dwell indelibly and imperishably the name and personality of their Master,—and they speak and meditate on that with which their hearts are full to overflow—the greatness and the love and the wonderful life of the MAN who revealed the Shining Lights of the Soul—the Swami Vivekananda.



## CXXXVIII.

### THE ARTIST.

Though the Swami was a man of the supersensuous mould, he was never out of touch with the ordinary facts or the purely human elements of life. This was because he could interpret everything in the light of the realisation of Brahman. Even physical experience was translated by him into spiritual terms. This constituted the artist in him, in the highest sense of the word, for he was certainly so in so far as he re-interpreted the experience of the senses in the lofty forms and language of the soul. His poems are replete with an intimate communion with the very soul of nature, with the spirit that dwells in the rivers, forests, seas, mountains, suns and stars, commingling to produce the most exquisitely artistic and yet spiritual expression. He was ascetic and artist in one. He never merged his nature in physical experience ; he was constantly the witness, the poet, the great dreamer who *meditated* on the phenomena of experience and saw the spiritual even *in* the physical. Music, art and language were, to his mind, so many methods for the re-interpretation of physical nature, so that the spirit stood, in the revelation, superior to the form.

He was an exceptional musician, in so far as the music of his own country was concerned, and he knew also, theoretically, the general technique of European music, particularly that of the French. And he was himself a most charming singer. A critic has said, that being himself a great lover of music, and having known many first-rate musicians, he was still of opinion that of all he had heard, none excelled the Swami Vivekananda as a highly accomplished master of the art. He writes further : "When the Swami sang, the melodiousness of his voice, harmonising with the outpouring of his innermost spirit, so powerfully enchanted his hearers, that they



were transported as it were, for the time being, into a higher sphere." And hundreds of other critics have also corroborated the same opinion in unreserved terms. Music used to stir his soul into ecstasy and rouse in him an ocean of divine feeling. Often he would be so merged in singing that he would forget food, sleep and everything. He could sing for hours upon hours together without showing the least sign of exhaustion. It was his singing which sent his Master into Samadhi. Though his voice for singing had become deteriorated, as he said, by constant lecturing in the West for several years, it had still a wonderful depth and sweetness which thrilled the heart-strings of his Indian hearers whenever he sang. He was an accomplished master of the sciences of vocal and instrumental music. In the days of his youth when he was known as Norendra Nath Dutta, a poor printer begged of him to help him in publishing a book of one thousand songs. He did so gladly by editing the whole work and writing an elaborate introduction of some ninety pages on the science of music, in which he pointed out its derivation from nature and its divineness as the expression of Absolute Reason. He said on one occasion, "If one cannot appreciate the harmony in nature, how can one appreciate God, the summation of all harmony, sublimity and beauty!" He could sing a love-song with as much abandonment as a song of prayer to the divinity or one setting forth the impersonal aspects of Brahman, for in the former his thoughts were directed to the Lord as the Eternal Beloved, the Lover of his soul. He who would not at first hear Sri Ramakrishna talk of the Gopis of Brindaban, would lose himself in later days in singing the exquisite psalms of Jayadev's "Gita-Govindam", and of other lover-poets! At one time, he remarked, "I would not give one straw, you know, for the man who was incapable of appreciating a love-song!" for he knew how important a phenomenon emotion was in the transfiguration of the human consciousness from the animal to the divine. Thinking of the Lord, he once quoted from the Persian poem which says, "For one mole on the face of my beloved, I would give all the

wealth of Samarcand!" In such moods he was like another Saint Francis of Assisi who found God even in the humorous and the trivial and compared himself to a mote dancing in the sunbeam of the Divine Grace. And the Swami, even as that great Western monk, could *dance* with joy unto the Lord.

If one conceives of the artistic instinct as a unit, then it is easily understood how poetry, art so-called, music and oratory are so many aspects thereof. In the Swami Vivekananda the various aspects of this unit genius expressed themselves in a unit personality. The artistic instinct itself was saturated with the experience of the Highest Consciousness, so that it became transfixed, transfigured and rendered altogether divine. Again, as for poetry, even his ordinary conversation and even his philosophy were that. In all his discourses and writings on religion and philosophy, he combined the boldest sublimity of conception with an incomparable simplicity of expression. Himself writing to a disciple from America he observed :—

"To put the Hindu ideas into English and then make out of dry philosophy, and intricate mythology, and queer, startling psychology, a religion which shall be easy, simple, popular, and at the same time meet the requirements of the highest minds,—is a task only those can understand who have attempted it. The abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life ; out of hopelessly intricate mythology must come concrete moral forms ; and out of bewildering yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical psychology,—and all this must be put in a form so that a child may grasp it. That is my life's work."

Even a casual reader of his Works will realise how beautifully the Swami has succeeded in his great mission of his life as a teacher. A learned lecturer has remarked :—

"Another aspect of his genius... is his poetic gift.....I refer to those wonderfully imaginative passages, those magnificent poetic outbursts that adorn his speeches and writings. His was a poet's soul, which perceived hints of beauty and divinity where the ordinary man perceives nothing, and revealed them to the world in language clothed with beauty as well as grace."

Once explaining his standpoint in the course of a

discussion with a disciple, the Swami exclaimed, "Don't you see, I am, above all, a *poet*!" And the Swami, realising himself the underlying spirituality in poetry and art, said in a certain mood, "That man cannot be truly religious, who has not the faculty of feeling the beauty and grandeur of art." Sometimes, after showing the religious aspect in art, the Swami would say: "It is blasphemy to state that art is merely pleasing to the senses. One who has the mastery over the senses, who has overcome the body-idea, can alone appreciate true beauty, be it masculine, or feminine, or purely physical. We must see everything from the spiritual viewpoint. Nature is the manifestation of God. Ugliness and impurity are in the mind of him who sees ugliness and impurity. Non-appreciation of art is crass ignorance! True art, true poetry, true music must always be spiritual."

Perceiving the relationship between religion and art in his own land, the Swami used to say, "Hindus live in religion, and Hindus live in art. Religious culture cannot but lead to the culture of art and *vice versa*. When the true history of India will be discovered, it will be proved that as India is the first teacher of man in the domain of religion, so she is also the first teacher in art." In Sri Ramakrishna he had seen the artistic faculty very highly developed. All his daily actions were marked with an artistic grace which was a part of his being. As a student of history the Swami had observed that wherever there was a renaissance of religion, there was in its wake a renaissance in arts, sciences and literature as well. Thus, after the advent of Buddha, the arts of sculpture and architecture received a new stimulus. Sri Chaitanya gave birth to the soul-stirring music known as *Sankirtana* accompanied by *Mridanga*. Believer as the Swami was in Sri Ramakrishna as the originator of a huge wave of spiritual revival which was destined to carry humanity in its resistless flood to the realisation of the living truths of religion, he was hopeful of the birth of a new era of progress in all branches of higher knowledge in his country, and consequently he

charged those who believed in the mission of Ramakrishna to take care how they fostered this. During his travels all over the world he was a keen observer of the artistic development of every nation, and deplored the degeneracy that had come upon it everywhere owing to the lack of originality. Whatever was done now, he found, was merely an attempt at imitation. As regards India, he pointed out that an immense field lay before the artists of the soil in portraying the images of the Hindu Gods and Goddesses, making them expressive of the symbolic conceptions which they stand for, and in illustrating on canvas the sublime and instructive episodes of the Upanishadic and Pouranic stories, and he communicated some of his ideas on them to his artist-friends. So far the attempts made in these directions seemed to him to have been inadequate and unsatisfactory. It is gratifying to note, however, that in recent years a new school of painting has arisen in Bengal, with the promise of an advanced outlook, depth of vision and a certain originality of conception.

The Swami was an artist through and through even in the simple acts of his life. He excelled in the art of cooking and had the delicacy of an epicure. In India kitchens are regarded as sacred places and cooking as an honourable accomplishment. The Hindu must offer his food to God in the Image, or mentally to Him as residing in the heart, before partaking of it. Therefore, the cooking is done in a religious spirit. The Swami's rigorous counsel to his followers concerning the religious element in the art of cooking teemed with representations of the necessity and the advantages of pure food.

He was also an eminent art critic. How well one remembers his criticism of a particular piece of sculpture at the Paris Exposition in 1900 ! There were two figures, one that of a man, the other of a beautiful woman. The former, representing a sculptor, or more properly an artist, placed his right hand with his tools on the lap of the woman ; with his left hand he was represented in the act of unveiling her

face, while on his own countenance shone forth the ecstasy of art. Underneath the figures was inscribed the title of the subject, "Art et Nature." The Swami pointing to this picture in a copy of the illustrated report of the Exposition, remarked, "The inscription is wrong. It should be 'Art unveiling Nature!'" He then dilated on the functions of art in general and on the necessity of discovering the links between the subjective world of interpretation and the objective world of experience, expression and phenomena. He said in purport as follows, as recorded by one of his artist disciples :—

"The artist unveils the beauty of nature to the uninitiated gaze. Just as the human face mirrors different expressions according to the inner feelings of the heart, so the same landscape wears different aspects and reveals different hidden ideas to the artist. To her beloved worshipper, the artist, Nature yields up the treasures of her infinite beauty. The artist catches some of the fleeting graces of coy Nature and gives them permanence. This is the initiative work of an artist. The worshipful gaze, the inclining posture, the poise of the head and the position of every limb of the man referred to in the above sculpture, speak of the sacred relation of the artist and his goddess. Whoever thus finds out the links of the inner and the outer world is alone able to give a perfect expression to them. And thus from the outflowing of eternal beauty from the inner to the outer world, the poet, the painter, the sculptor makes his conceptions, and concretises and expresses them for the benefit of humanity. This is the highest and noblest mission of the artist."

Speaking of his art criticisms, it must be mentioned that he had little admiration for English art. He held that the Englishman's efforts to imbibe art in daily life originated by his contact with the Asiatic, with whom art is a part of his being. Too much of English art had been devoted to animal life, landscapes and mere form, whereas the old Indian votaries of art centring their energies exclusively to give expression to the idealities of conceptions at the sacrifice of the form, had degenerated art into what often approaches the grotesque. What was really desirable was a uniform fusion of the two functions of art, namely, that of embodying transcendental ideas, and yet remaining in harmonious touch

with external nature. He used to illustrate this point by saying that, as the lotus plant grows in a muddy pool and rears its flower above the water, the stalk remaining in the water, so art, though having its origin in the gross realities and experiences of the objective world, nevertheless rises above the sensuous plane. And at one time he was heard to exclaim, "Verily, art *is* Brahman!" To appreciate such outbursts of insight requires a remarkable synthesis of the spiritual outlook, and that he fully possessed.

With reference to Indian arts and sciences the Swami was constantly on the defence, an instance of which was noticed in his address before the Paris Congress of the History of Religions. In his conversation with Professor Max Muller in England, Greek influence on Indian architecture was one of the topics, which was, however, not mentioned at the time of recording it. The Swami contended by pointing out to him the contrast between Greek and Indian art, which proved to his mind the far-fetchedness of the theory of Greek art influence on India. The sculptures of the Buddhist period had no resemblance to those of the Greeks. The Greek sculptor was very exact in the details of anatomy, while the Indian almost completely overlooked physical details in his endeavour to portray mental aspects. In India, every good sculptor was a skilled mason. The Swami regarded the Gandhara sculptures as degenerate forms of art. Indian architecture, he believed to be far superior to that of Greece, because it invariably expressed some definite idea ; Greek architecture, on the contrary, did not.

In India, the Swami always detected in all architecture and even in commonplace rural cottages, an accurate expression of some idea or other. To quote the writer above referred to :—

"While travelling in Rajputana, Swamiji was very much struck with the beauty and the perfect expression of a tomb at Alwar. While visiting the Taj at Agra he remarked, 'If you squeeze a bit of these marbles, it will drip drops of Royal Love and its Sorrow.' 'People say, Calcutta is a city of palaces, but the houses look like so many boxes

placed one upon the other ! They convey no idea whatever. In Rajputana you can still find much pure Hindu architecture. If you look at a Dharmasala, you will feel as if it calls you with open arms to take shelter within and partake of its unqualified hospitality. If you look at a temple, you are sure to find divinity blooming in and about it. If you look about a rural cottage, you will at once be able to comprehend the special meanings of its different portions, and that the whole structure bears evidence to the predominant ideal of the owner thereof. This sort of expressive architecture I have seen elsewhere only in Italy." He had a great admiration for Italian art.

"About Greek representations of Jesus he remarked that the Greeks had never appreciated the internal development of Christ ; if they had, they could not have portrayed Him as being so muscular in appearance. For, a highly advanced spiritual person can never have a muscular body. In this respect the statues of Buddhadeva are very praiseworthy. One can at once gauge the spiritual development of a nation by studying its art..."

The Swami's mind was thoroughly imbued with the mystical experience. For this reason, his music, his art criticisms, his poetry, his philosophy were overshadowed with the spiritual consciousness. To him every atom teemed with the Life of the Whole, every form was a manifestation of the Eternal Beauty, a semblance of the Eternal Reality. As is often the case, though in a lesser degree with great authors and thinkers, that when writing they are in such intimate contact with their subject as almost to visualise it, so the Swami in composing his poems would mystically discover the *personality* and the *spirituality* of his subject. The same writer quoting the Swami's poems on the point says :—

".....These things were indeed the fruits of his realisation and not flights of imagination like those of a poet. In 1891 he was travelling on foot in the Himalayas with Swami Akhandananda, one of his Gurubhais. One night, when all was calm, he went alone to the side of the Ganges to meditate and commune with Nature. Coming back after a long time he exclaimed to his Brother, 'Look, to-night I have heard the Ganges streaming in *Kedar Ragini* !' He would often sit by a cascade and find out the particular kind of music arising therefrom, e. g., in *Gouri Ragini* &c., and at times accompany it with his voice. Sometimes he would hear the song of a bird and find out the exact key in which it

sang. Only very slight touches of all these are to be found in his poems. ....This was not impossible for one who could hear the *Omkardhvani*, the unvibrated sound of the Life vibration of the universe. Sometimes he used to perceive one ceaseless Beauty in sound, taste and space. In the realisation of that infinite Beauty, at the dawn of which the poet is struck dumb, the painter's pencil drops from his hand, and the sculptor stands motionless, the Swami would sing with proud elation :

“Calmed are the clamours of the urgent flesh ;  
Hushed is the tumult of the boastful mind ;  
Cords of the heart are loosened and set free ;  
Unfastened are the bondages that bind ;  
Attachment and Delusion are no more !

Aye ! There sounds sonorous the Sound  
Void of vibration ! Verily, Thy Voice !”

(From “*A Song I Sing to Thee*.” “*Complete Works*,” page 998)

Speaking of the art of poetry the Swami would say, “Poetic suggestion is the highest poetry.” There should not be too much detail in the depicting of an ideal. The poet gives a few touches of an ideal at its highest glimpses. A poem should act as a stimulus, flooding the heart and mind with light, waking up a sea of emotions.

Like many gifted artists, he could descend of a sudden from the most serious to the most playful, as his many letters, at once so literary and so human, attest. Verily, from the very highest insight and erudition to the commonplace incidents of life,—under his masterly artistic touch all became magnetised with a certain richness of personality, directness of appeal and literary beauty.





## CXXXIX.

### THE MYSTIC AND PHILOSOPHER.

That the Swami was an artist was because he was, first of all, a mystic. With him spirituality entered into everything. Had he painted, he would have painted like Raphael on his knees. And as a philosopher he was more than Saint Thomas of Aquinas, who never wrote a line without first praying on his knees before the Crucifix. The description of the Swami as an artist showed how the spiritual instinct had re-interpreted for him the functions of art and entirely remodelled its domain. He was the man of Realisation, the Yogi, the Mystic, in all attitudes of life. His whole career has spoken of the dominant note and of the influence of Realisation. His experiences in Raja Yoga had transmuted the normal functions of his consciousness into finer perceptions. Thus even his intelligence was thoroughly spiritualised. Indeed, so great was his power of Realisation at one time that with but a touch he could have conferred Samadhi. But he said after his first return from the West, that constant lecturing and overwork had made dominant the Rajasic over the purely Satvic quality, and hence that power was lying dormant in him. "Nevertheless," he added, "it is always in my power to revive it. A short stay in the Himalayas in deep meditation, free from all public work and activity, can at any moment bring it back!" And in his latter days when he led a comparatively private and a meditative life, he told one of his Sannyasin disciples that he could show him the tangible workings of the psychic nerves of Ida, Pingala and Sushumna in the body. This means, no doubt, quickening them into action which leads to the highest realisation of the Yogi,—the beatific union of the awakened Jivatman with the Paramatman. A great Yogi as he was, among the many vibhutis or powers that came

to him, he could see, if he so willed, the mental make-up and the past or future of any personality. On one occasion he had told two of his English disciples that in a previous life they had been Buddhists ; and to an American, meditating a return to his own country from England for professional reasons, he remarked, "If you go to America it will fare ill with you financially. If you remain here, you will receive some slight injury to your foot, but professionally you will do well." The man having faith in the Swami's words preferred to remain in London ; and as was spoken by the Swami, even so did it come to pass ! But it must be borne in mind that except in rare cases, as for the benefit of those for whom he felt deeply, the foretelling of events, and any manifestation of psychic powers in and for themselves, were held by him to be an obstacle in the spiritual path.

If he was a great philosopher, it was also because he was a great mystic. Indeed, speaking of his own experiences as a lecturer in America, when he incessantly gave out his marvellous philosophical ideas, he said later on, "When I was to lecture, all that pertaining to the subject would pass through my mind in picture forms. I had only to give expression to them, and nothing else." One sees in this remark how a certain distinctive spiritual faculty of his Master, to whom somewhat similar experiences had occurred when he instructed the people, became the Swami's very own. Again he said of himself, "It was as if another were the lecturer and I the witness ! It was as though I heard my own voice as that of another !" And telling of the Power he often felt descending upon him when he lectured, he would say, "When I stand on the platform, a Power comes over me which makes me feel as though by one word I could carry the whole audience of thousands across Maya and make them break the prison-walls of '*I*' and '*Mine*' !"

His philosophy cannot be separated from his spiritual experience, for it is the language thereof. It was a school of its own, gained from observations along all lines of human speculation and realisation concerning the Divine Nature.

To him religion and philosophy were controvertible terms. He made poetry of philosophy, for as the background of ideas was an ocean of spiritual emotion, lashed into waves by the winds of his realisation. To his poetic vision, the Upanishads were the greatest poems ever given out by man to man. Incomparably different from mere scholasticism and professorial philosophy, his thought-system, emanating like sparks from the anvil of his soul, set souls afire and brought on the greatest longing for renunciation and spiritual experience. His audiences were always transformed into a state of heightened passivity. He spoke as saints speak. He desired that man might understand what angels knew. He wished to share his realisations with others. Behind his philosophy was the spiritual temperament and his character was the test of his intellectual assertions. It was therefore that his philosophy aroused in men not one, but all the faculties of consciousness in a new and spiritual awakening. Jnanam became mixed with Bhakti ; and the path of work, it became clear, was a form of the Raja Yogi's meditation. To him there was no difference between the service of man and the worship of God. While he spoke, oftentimes a consciousness of *what he was* came over him ; and then he would literally shake big audiences into a strange spiritual oneness with his own spirit. His personality, his bearing, the romanticism imprinted on his countenance, the spiritual luminousness of his eyes, all these spoke as eloquently as his words. Years of meditation and spiritual austerity were behind him, and hence his very words were living potencies. His logic and reasoning were so accurate because of the shining light of his spiritual experiences. Theory had become subordinated to the spiritual fact, for he had plunged the ploughshare of his thought into the very Bowels of Being. He had undermined all appearance in his discovery of Reality. The greatest worldly learning, the highest philosophical flights he included in the larger synthesis of the spiritual realisation that flamed forth in his every utterance. The Bhagavad-Gita, the Upanishads, and the Vedanta Sutras

rang with new meaning as he spoke of them. Kant and Sankaracharya were discussed from the point of view of a higher and more immediate knowledge of That concerning which they had philosophised. Even his comments on the Jnana-kanda of the Vedas became Vedas themselves in the strong light of his newer and fuller definition.

His philosophical forms were throughout synthetic. And had it not been for the simplicity of his diction and the powerful lucidity of his interpretation, the new synthetic school of thought to which he gave birth would have been hopelessly beyond the ken of normal understanding. The theories of Maya and of Cosmos which confound the student of the Vedanta philosophy were, as expounded by him in his London lectures, a marvel of lucidity and insight. He did not profess to have found a new solution to them, for the solution had been found thousands of years ago by the Aryan Sages in the unassailable proof of their super-conscious realisation of Truth. The Mission of the Swami as the apostle of religious philosophy and philosophical religion was, as had always been that of the prophets and Acharyas, to restate, re-illustrate, and give them expression as to make them clearer to the contemporary intellect. In his lecture on "The Cosmos" he says :—

"We do not pretend to throw any new light on these all-absorbing problems, but only to put before you the ancient truth in the language of modern times, to speak the thoughts of the ancients in the language of the moderns, to speak the thoughts of the philosophers in the language of the people, to speak the thoughts of the angels in the language of man, to speak the thoughts of God in the language of poor humanity, so that man will understand them ; for the same divine essence from which the ideas emanated, is ever present in man, and therefore he can always understand them."

Though his teaching was throughout highly philosophical it was substantiated by an eminent practicality. His dominant desire was to make the Vedanta practical, so that instead of remaining a mass of mere abstractions it might interpenetrate society and be a living religion, a living fact

in the everyday life of the individual in every station of life, as it was in the glorious days of the Upanishads. In all the principal lectures that he delivered in India, he laid special emphasis on the intense practicality of the Vedanta, and showed with his convincing power of reasoning that it was not a dreamy philosophy, and that its practical effect on human conduct was not to induce inaction and indifference, tending to weaken the motive for human exertion, as is often alleged through ignorance or bigotry, but that it was the very reverse of it. And, moreover, he adjusted new spheres of functions and activities into it in the logical application and extensification of its intrinsic principles, in consonance with the changed conditions and needs of the times.

Unity was the secret of his spiritual experience ; unity was the background of his philosophical learning. Thought-systems, in his statement, were to be regarded not in their isolated, but in their comparative or complementary relations. All were methods of perceiving reality ; and none were true unless perception itself had been attained. He laboured for reconciliation amongst all conflicting camps of thought. The great character of his philosophy was its spiritual and emotional worth. It was throughout pragmatic, and while predominatingly monistic, it was inclusive, as well, of all pluralistic statement. To him the Many and the One were the same Reality, perceived by the mind at different times and in different attitudes. The pluralistic must end in the monistic vision. With the eye of a seer he demonstrated in a most convincing manner the grand truth to the warring sects of India, that the Dvaita, the Visishtadvaita and the Advaita were but three phases or stages in the development of the soul, which reaches the highest goal in the perception of Oneness. Such an one does not discard the Dualistic outlook, but deifies it by seeing unity in diversity, by seeing God, his self and the universe as one. Reconciliation of opposites was the Swami's main labour in the philosophical field, and this was because, spiritually, he was a monist. Reality, he knew, might be reached either by an ineffable per-

ception thereof, or through a multiplicity of forms. But the main theme in all his philosophy was character. That was the guarantee of any mystical experience that might transpire.

Thus the Swami as a philosopher combined logical presentation with the unimpeachable self-evidence that Realisation brings. The pros and cons of logic were so dovetailed one into the other as to make the unassailable synthesis which declared that all religions were true, and all philosophies different diagrams of the same reality. His was the synthetic mind, always a rare instance. He perceived Truth at all angles and through all perspectives. And this was because he had had, like his great Master, the all-reconciling genius that the realisation of the Absolute Truth in the Nirvikalpa Samadhi induces. Though he perceived the grandeur of the ancestral inheritance of Hinduism, he bowed his head with equal reverence before those other forms of Religion, like Buddhism and Roman Catholicism, which had Truth and Sadhana, Devotion and Renunciation, as pillars, to support them. With equal enthusiasm he could speak of Guru Nanak and Buddha, of Krishna and Mohammad, of Sri Chaitanya and Jesus the Christ, for he had realised the Divinity of these. That is why different persons saw him through different lenses. Some saw a Buddha in him, others a Sankaracharya and so on, because of his intimate acquaintance with the respective realisation of each, as stated in the Gospel of the former and the Commentaries of the latter.

It must always be remembered that the Swami's was a unit mind. Art entered even into his philosophy, and dry history or philosophy he animated with an emotional and a visualising power that was his very own. He could show the inter-relationship of history and religion, and would speak of Shivaji as the disciple of a saint, of Omar as the devotee, of the great Emperor Asoka, as Asoka the monk. And then *vice versa*, he would show the maker of history and remoulder of a national consciousness in the Buddha, and the statesman and political seer in Mohammad. In the make-up of the Swami's temperament, one saw glimpses of the intellect of

Sankara, the heart of Buddha, the realisation of Sri Chaitanya, and the spiritual fire of Guru Nanak combined with the mildness of Jesus the Christ and the apostolic eloquence of Saint Paul. As a thinker he was possessed of a great catholicity, and yet he was firm with reference to his own conclusions. He could see the genuineness of another's point of view, but denounced any "vicious intellectualism" in scathing terms. As the artist is passionately in love with his ideal, so was the Swami both artistically and passionately in love with Truth. His very philosophy was artistic, both in arrangement and in statement. To read his utterances requires no preliminary schooling in logic. They stand to evidences and natural intelligence as the visible universe about one. For in the deepest meaning of the phrase, it was all living fact to him and not fancy. It was realisation, not speculation. It was mysticism, more than logic; Vision of spiritual reality, more than philosophical form. It was characterised by consecutiveness of idea, logical accuracy, clear conception and lucid statement; but above and beyond these, it was the Personal Experience of the Divine Life.

There is no greater summing-up of the general impression upon the thoughtful world of the greatness of the Swami Vivekananda as a philosopher and as a mystic than that which was made concerning him by the late Professor William James, whose own utterance may be taken as the utterance of the superior understanding of the Swami by those who knew him both in the East and the West. Writing in much later years, in his book entitled *Pragmatism*, in which he quotes two striking and illustrative passages from the Swami's lecture, he says :—

"To interpret absolute monism worthily, be a mystic. Mystical states of mind in every degree are shown by history, usually though not always, to make for the monistic view.....The paragon of all monistic systems is the Vedanta philosophy of Hindusthan, and the paragon of Vedantist missionaries was the late Swami Vivekananda who visited our land some years ago. The method of Vedantism is the mystical method. You do not reason, but after going through a certain discipline you see, and

, you can report the truth. Vivekananda thus reports the truth in one of his lectures here :—

“Where is then any more misery for him who sees this Oneness in the universe, this Oneness of life, Oneness of everything?.....This separation between man and man, man and woman, man and child, nation from nation, earth from moon, moon from sun, this separation between atom and atom is the cause really of all this misery, and the Vedanta says this separation does not exist, it is not real. It is merely apparent, on the surface. In the heart of things there is unity still. If you go inside you find that unity between man and man, women and children, races and races, high and low rich and poor, the gods and men : all are One, and animals too if you go deep enough, and he who has attained to that has no more delusions.....Where is there any more delusion for him? He knows the reality of everything, the secret of everything. Where is then any more misery for him? What does he desire? He has traced the reality of everything, the secret of everything unto the Lord, that Centre, that Unity of everything, and that is Eternal Bliss, Eternal Knowledge, Eternal Existence. Neither death nor desire nor sorrow nor misery nor discontent is There.....In the Centre, the Reality, there is no one to be mourned for, no one to be sorry for. He has penetrated everything, the Pure One, the Formless, the Bodiless, the Stainless, He the Knower, He the great Poet, the Self-Existent, He who is giving to everyone what he desires.’

“Observe how radical the character of monism here is. Separation is not simply overcome by the One, it is denied to exist. There is no many. We are not parts of the One ; it has no parts ; and since in a sense we undeniably *are*, it must be that each one of us *is* the One, indivisibly and totally. *An Absolute One, and I that One*—surely we have here a religion which emotionally considered, has a high pragmatic value ; it imparts a perfect sumptuousity of security. As our Swami says in another place :

“‘When man has seen himself as One with the infinite Being of the universe, when all separateness has ceased, when all men, all women, all angels, all gods, all animals, all plants, the whole universe has been melted into that oneness ; then all fear disappears. Whom to fear ? Can I hurt myself ? Can I kill myself ? Do you fear yourself ? Then will all sorrow disappear. What can cause me sorrow ? I am the One Existence of the universe. Then all jealousies will disappear ; of whom to be jealous ? Of myself ? Then all bad feelings disappear. Against whom shall I have this bad feeling ? Against myself ? There is none in the universe but me.\*\*\* Kill out this differentiation, kill out this superstition that there are many. He who in this world of



many, sees that One ; he who in this mass of insentientcy, sees that One Sentient Being ; he who in this world of shadow, holds on to that Reality, unto him belongs eternal peace, unto none else, unto none else !

"We all have some ear for this monistic music : it elevates and reassures. We all have at least the germ of mysticism in us. And when our idealists recite their arguments for the Absolute, saying that the slightest union admitted anywhere carries logically absolute Oneness with it, and that the slightest separation admitted anywhere logically carries disunion, remissless and complete, I cannot help suspecting that the palpable weak places in the intellectual reasoning they use are protected from their own criticism by a mystical feeling that, logic or no logic, absolute Oneness must somehow at any cost be true. Oneness overcomes *moral* separateness at any rate. In the passion of love one has the mystic germ of what might mean a total union of all sentient life. This mystical germ wakes up in us on hearing the monistic utterances, acknowledges their authority, and assigns to intellectual considerations a secondary place."

No better definition could be given of Vivekananda as the philosopher-mystic than this. He thoroughly mastered the meaning and spirit of his philosophy and was conscious of the power of his message, and that is why Professor James appreciated him so highly. The Swami knew that as a *rational* religion Vedantism was supreme in the world, and was going to be the religion of the future humanity. He admired the great religious idealism embodied in several of the Western thought-systems. He had once gone so far as to say that Kant was, in certain respects, even more transcendental than Sankaracharya ; but he also always knew that *realisation* stood behind the ideals of Indian philosophies. These were the utterances of the direct perception of the Reality. These were the thoughts of men who had *felt* and *seen* that which they gave forth in the form of philosophy, thus uniting religion and philosophy.

Underlying the whole message of the Swami Vivekananda, underlying his brilliant philosophical epigrams, underlying the eloquence of his lectures, one always remembered that "Here is a Man of Realisation !"



## CXL.

### THE BHAKTA AND KARMA-YOGIN.

Verily, the Swami Vivekananda was like a Great Jewel scintillating in innumerable facets of thought and soul. He seemed to have literally appropriated within his nature all the essential elements of Indian race culture, and particularly of Hinduism. He was, in the very heart of things, the Incarnation of the Spirit of the Land.

One need not wonder, then, that he was as great a Bhakta as a Karma-Yogin, even as he was a Raja-Yogin and a Jnana Yogin. His soul performed innumerable rhapsodies and variations upon the great musical notes of the Indian spiritual experience. He was a man of prodigious thought and a man of prodigious feeling. As in the museums and galleries, the invaluable objects of art are oftentimes placed on movable pedestals, so as to be turned to any angle for the observation of the critic, so was the soul of the Swami placed in this museum of the world and in this gallery of human and historic experience in such a way that his nature moved to all attitudes and moods of the human spirit to any angle in the human perspective, on the revolving pedestal of an All-inclusive Greatness.

Many times it seemed as if his heart would burst with the torrents of his love for God and Man. He not only penetrated into the Fathomless Abyss of the Eternal Wisdom but he lost himself, as well, in the Ocean of Eternal Love. His whole frame often gave way with the burden of his emotions, and he would weep, or he would give vent to ecstatic joy with the varying moods of his soul. He could throw himself into an idea until it became so tinged with his heart's blood and coloured with the vitality of his whole personality, that it was no longer an intellectual but a spiritual reality. If he was a great Jnani and a great Yogi

he was no less a Bhakta and a Karma Yogin. Indeed, he was spoken of even as a flame of Love, shrouded by great clouds of Wisdom.

The Swami believed in a Personal God as well as the Super-Personal Divinity of the Pure Brahman. He believed that there was a Great Guiding Intelligence, loftiest in Wisdom, deepest in Love, omnipotent in Power and Present Universally, of which human personality is, verily, in essence, the image and the likeness. He believed in some transcendent manner of personal reconciliation and because of his own spiritual experience that the Image of God, which is the soul, when perfected, merges in That which is True Individuality, which is the Grand Super-Personal Individual of the Universe, the Unifying Self of all selves. He believed that the Personal God is the Highest Form of the Substance of Divinity, the highest reading of the Absolute by the human mind, and that God is ever nearer than the nearest, and ever-loving. At times he felt this closeness with God, this superior existence of the soul and the consequent relative-ness of all temporal concerns in an intense way. And his heart would pour forth all its contents in his feeling. He would lose himself to his environment, becoming filled with Bhava or Ecstatic Love. He would shed tears of blessedness and joy and sometimes fall prostrate before the Images of the Lord or before the Glory of the Soul, as the Self Divine. He realised that Divinity is both outside and inside, that it is both psychically and spiritually omnipresent. Sometimes, taking up a certain definite ideal, he would worship the Divinity in that Form. Sometimes going beyond forms, he would worship the Formless Divinity which is everywhere and in every thing. Sometimes he would see Divinity in a man or a woman, sometimes in Nature, sometimes in an Image, sometimes in the power of spiritual thought. He did not care whether Love was external or internal. He knew that Love IS. So he worshipped it on all occasions, and under all forms. He would see even the Terrible as manifesting Love. He would sometimes realise

that he was a part of Nature and Time, and so he would often feel his Oneness with all life, under whatever appearance it revealed itself. The worm and the Highest God, God Himself and a blade of grass, the whirling motion of suns and the slow movement of a snail, the least and the greatest, the highest and the lowest, the saint and the sinner, the most distant past and the most distant future, the most wicked spirit and the purest soul,—somehow, in his perception of ubiquitous Divinity, he realised that all of these were indissolubly woven into one great Pattern of the Spirit, and that the threads of that Pattern were those of Irresistible Attraction and Unspeakable Love. And Jnana Yoga being the Path to the Seeing of Oneness in manifoldness, and Raja Yoga being the mental and spiritual discipline for that realisation, he saw that Bhakti or Love, also, had as its final purpose the sensing and the realisation of Oneness. And in this light the wisest of the wise and the most ignorant, the lowest and the highest of human beings he made equally his God, bowing down to the absolute Divinity in each. Even in the tiger, he said, one must see that Love, just as Lord Buddha saw it, in a previous incarnation, when He gave His body to the starving tigress. And Love knows no sacrifice which is too great, and Love knows no bargaining. It is active ; it is passionately self-surrendering. Even such was the Love of the Swami for Humanity and Nature and God and All That Is. In this he was a follower both of the Divinity that is Embodied and the Divinity of the Formless Brahman. Indeed, he would even make the Abstract Truth an Idol of Love. He would realise Truth as Beauty and Beauty as Truth and both of these as Reality, and his whole being would yearn to become merged in Truth.

Indeed, the Swami felt that the Beneficent Power and the Intelligence of the Universe were close to the human heart, that one need but realise the Nearness of God as a Living Presence, and then all evil, all terror, all sorrow, all weakness and all bondage would vanish. At such hours of blessedness the Swami would repeat in the form of intonation the prayer:

"O Lord ! Thou art our Father ; Thou art our Mother ; Thou art our Beloved Friend. Thou art the source of all strength ; give us strength ! Thou art the young man walking in the pride of youth ; Thou art the old man, tottering on his staff. Thou art all things Sin and virtue, good and evil, beauty and ugliness, the pleasing and the terrible are all united in Thee, Thou the All-wise ! I see me in Thee, and Thee in me, and me and Thee as one !"

It must always be remembered that the Swami's was Bhakti-mixed-with-Jnanam, a type of Bhakti which was as much transcendental as emotional, a Bhakti in which the Personal and the Impersonal played 'hide-and-seek', as it were.

In all matters of vision and of life and realisation the Swami strove to find the Oneness. The idea of a unifying oneness, a harmonising oneness, literally possessed him, and whensoever difficulties arose in the realms of thought or of soul, if ever he found ideals apparently conflicting with each other, he invariably succeeded in discovering the third factor, the background, which made them complementary and mutually explanatory,—and this was inevitably the vision of Oneness. This was the Sankaracharya type of mind revealed pragmatically. Sankara's vision of Oneness was only through the spiritual. But here was a type of mind which sought for the inclusion of all facts and relations, and which made endeavour to perceive sanctity and divinity and greatness of human and spiritual experience in everything. And those who would understand the seemingly irreconcilable complexities of the Dharma and of the Man and Teacher, Vivekananda, must arrive at this same vision of Oneness, intellectually it is true, but more specifically, he must perceive this spiritually and intuitively. For the Vision of Oneness is the root of all spiritual facts, the very basis of the higher life and the foundation of the highest Universal Law which declares, "All this is One."

The Swami would take up any religious ideal, any Personification of Divinity and see in it, the different forms of manifestation of God. It is told of him how he worshipped

the Divinity in the Virgin Mary of Roman Catholicism, how he worshipped and loved the Christ as the Oriental Teacher. And all his disciples know how he was accustomed to worship and love his Master, or Buddha or Sri Krishna, or Rama, or the Mother under all Her Forms, or Sniva, the Lord of Monks, or the God-intoxicated Saints.

But, none the less, he loved Man. And for this reason he preached Karma Yoga, or the Yoga of Work and Service. And how overwhelming was the personal realisation of the Swami with regard to work! He worked day and night, and night and day, for the idea he had in mind. He worked in spite of success and in the radiance of defeat. He worked with no will of his own, always declaring, "Lord, Thy will be done! Who am I, O Lord, to impose my will on others!" And with the Royal Psalmist of Judaea he exclaimed, "Not unto ourselves, O Lord, not unto ourselves, but unto Thy Name be glory!" He travelled the whole world over in the giving of his message, facing the hardships and difficulties of new lands, meeting with strange peoples, always preaching only the highest truth, his whole life exemplifying the greatness of his teaching. And preaching and teaching became like breathing to him, as he once expressed it in a letter. And in India he literally thought and worked himself to death, hoping, praying for India, meditating on her problems, solving them, striving for the realisation of Indian ideals, and ready at any moment to lay down his life for the Cause. And yet he took no credit unto himself, remembering the words of the Lord in the Gita, "It is I, O Arjuna, Who performs everything. Thou art only an instrument. It is I Who am the doer!" "To work you have the right, and not to the fruits thereof." And filled with this spirit, alike in fortune and in misfortune, he endeavoured at all times to possess equanimity of mind, always loving his God, always following the path of Jnana Yoga, or discrimination between the real and the unreal, always thinking for others, living for others and working for work's sake. And the Name of the Mother was ever on his lips,

and the Spirit of the Master ever in his heart. And over and above the giving of his message, the doing of his work, the performance of his spiritual austerities, and the love of his God, ring out those notes of a child, crying for guidance and for strength, "Mother! Mother! Thou art the doer, I am Thy Slave! Thou dost push me on; Thou dost lead me; Thou art all in all; I am only a child! I am not great, Thou alone art great! In this world Thou art doing Thy work. Thou art playing with Thy children. When my play is done, do Thou take me in Thy arms. Thou knowest best! Mother! O Mother Divine, I want no honour or praise from men; I want no wealth or pleasures of the flesh. Only let my soul flow into Thee as the confluence of the Ganges and the Jamuna! O Mother, grant that my mind may always dwell within the Lotus of Thy Holy Feet!"

Such was the Swami Vivekananda, the Jnani, the Yogi, the Bhakta, and withal, the greatest worker,—the lover, the friend, the servant of Man!



## CXLI.

### THE CONVERSATIONALIST.

A remarkable characteristic of the Swami was his all-sidedness. His public utterances were composed of words that seemed red-hot from the furnace of his intellect, heated by the fire of his emotions and distinguished with a marvellous directness and inexpressible force. Each sentence he uttered came thundering on the audience, between the flashes of the revealed spirit. His gestures themselves were eloquent, and whole audiences were often so stirred that, had he required it, all would have risen as one man to do his bidding. Yet this same "Lightning Orator" and "Hindu Cyclone", as the American papers had characterised him, could be silent as unspoken thought, when in the meditative state. His conversational powers revealed the most universal aspect of his genius ; and yet by his mere presence he could voluminously convey the most complex thought. His practical commonsense was enormous, and yet no one possessed greater intuitive insight than he. As one has truly remarked, "He never struck one as a loiterer on the way. In whatever he did he took a decisive step towards his goal. That is why his very talk was so inspired, that is why his speeches were so telling, his works so luminous, and his teachings so full of practical wisdom."

If he was known publicly as a genius, he was known as such even better privately. One disciple has written, "All who knew Swamiji on the lecture platform only, had but a small measure of his true power and greatness. It was in familiar conversation with chosen friends and disciples that came out his most brilliant flashes of illumination, his loftiest flights of eloquence and his utterances of profoundest wisdom." He often passed such striking remarks in private conversation as would seem at first sight to have no



connection with the general subject. But to understand such epigrams it would be necessary to see from his point of view, to possess his vision, which had soared between his talks, with lightning rapidity, beyond the plane of immediate and particularised deductions and applications, into the highest flights of the universal. So instructive and interesting were his talks that one could hear them for hours without being wearied. His conversations were not always religious or even serious. Often they would be frivolous, but invariably delightful and fascinating. His letters, in which he leaps, as it were, from solemnity to fun, and from fine intellectualism to exquisitely human touches, and *vice-versa*, best reveal the varied character of his personality. He could deal light-heartedly with a serious subject without making it appear light and trivial. Such was the charm of his personality that he could fulminate against those whom he loved, without provoking any feeling of bitterness. In this quality, of leaving no sediment of disagreeableness in the hearts of his hearers, his criticism was unique. They knew that his heart was as sound as ever and that he only chastened those for whom he felt deeply. This accounts for his violent denunciations of his countrymen for their religious apathy, sloth, lack of unity and practicality. He wanted them to rouse themselves once more to the consciousness of the great destiny of their religion and country, and he laid down methods, which were constructive and not destructive, for its fulfilment. He knew how to touch the heart-strings of millions, and his fiery words have caught the soul of his people and brought on a transformation in the form of the New Spirit visible everywhere.

Whatever subject he touched upon he spoke like one inspired. And every time he spoke on the same subject he treated it from a different standpoint throwing some new light upon it. Unconventional though his language sometimes was in private conversation with friends and fellow-monks, he was singularly free from vulgarity. He was frank to the extreme and fearless of criticism. He

would even sacrifice his friends for the sake of speaking out an unpleasant truth when it touched some vital point, as the well-being of his own religion, or his country.

In argument he was invincible. Rare, indeed, was the man who could withstand the force of his rigorous reasoning and proofs, put forward by him in vindication of his position, or in vanquishing an antagonist. Though eloquent and overwhelming in argument, he had the characteristic of being supremely patient with the views of others. Yet he was not less the enthusiast because of this courteous deference even to the impatient arguments of others. In matters religious he was nothing short of a born educator, a teacher allowing infinite freedom of thought and expression to the taught. His liberality in allowing others to battle with him intellectually was pronounced. He never exhibited annoyance at being interrupted, either in the course of his private talks or class teaching, when he perceived that the questions were asked in an enquiring spirit. Dissatisfied he always was with bigoted, self-centred or egotistic reasoning. Then his combative spirit would be roused and he would fall upon his opponent like a thunderbolt. This phase of his nature was most predominant in him when in America he had to wrestle with bigoted and orthodox Christian divines and religious fanatics who stupidly contradicted him on his own ground. One of the American papers remarked very truly :—

“But woe to the man who undertook to combat the monk on his own ground, and that was where they all tried it who tried it at all. His replies came like flashes of lightning and the venturesome questioner was sure to be impaled on the Indian's shining intellectual lance. The workings of his mind, so subtle and so brilliant, so well-stored and so well-trained, dazzled his hearers, but it was always a most interesting study...”

In arguing with an opponent, after hearing a few words, he could catch the whole drift of the reasoning that the other was going to offer in support of his position, and he would at once meet him half-way and confound him by cutting the ground from under his feet. Or when challenged to defend himself he would naively turn the table upon his adversary and silence him. But even when provoked, his language was

dignified, and he was never otherwise than courteous and generous to his opponents, unless they grossly abused and vilified him. He was never found hesitating for a crushing or an illuminative reply. So well-reasoned out had been his thoughts and ideas on all vital problems of human interest, in their pros and cons, that he was never at his wits' end, and his replies came sharp and quick, coloured with his ready wit and shining with a vigour of expression which made them irresistible. He never cared to argue for argument's sake. He detested loud and violent argumentation. There was one occasion when persons were quarrelling and disputing about him and he sat seeming as if he scarcely heard them, an empty tumbler in his hand was crushed into pieces,—the only sign he ever gave of the mortification caused to him by the discussion. A learned writer says :—

“When he spoke, the words came with the force and conviction that is born of a fervid patriotism and the power of a man of action ....

“The Swami Vivekananda was at his best in conversation. His deepest experiences and thoughts were communicated in course of conversation. His learning, his dialectical skill, the readiness of his resources, his large sympathies which were not confined to particular races or nations, his keen observation of men and manners, and his strong patriotism made his talk brilliant, instructive and inspiring. His presentment of ordinary historical events so as to reveal their deeper meanings was matchless.”

To gain a still clearer view of this phase of his character, it is well to quote at length a few of the reminiscences of the Sister Nivedita from “The Master As I Saw Him” :—

“To our cottage (at Belur) came the Swami daily, at sunrise, alone, or accompanied by some of his Brothers. And here, under the trees, long after our early breakfast was ended, we might still be found seated, listening to that inexhaustible flow of interpretation, broken but rarely by question and answer, in which he would reveal to us some of the deepest secrets of the Indian world. I am struck afresh whenever I turn back upon this memory, by the wonder as to how such a harvest of thought and experience could possibly have been garnered, or how, when once ingathered, could have come such energy of impulse for its giving-forth. Amongst brilliant conversationalists, the Swami was peculiar in one respect. He was never known to show the slightest impatience at interruption. He was by no means indifferent as to the minds he

was addressing. His deepest utterances were heard only in the presence of such listeners as brought a subtle sympathy and reverence into the circle about him. But I do not think he was himself aware of this, and certainly no external circumstance seemed to have power to ruffle him. Moods of storm and strength there were in plenty ; but they sprang, like those of sweetness, from hidden sources ; they were entirely general and impersonal in their occasion."

"To the scale and range of his thought, his conversation was of course our only clue. His talk was always of the impersonal. It was not always religious, as that word goes, any more than his own Master's had been. It was very often secular. But it was always vast. There was never in it anything mean or warped, or petty. There was no limitation of sympathy anywhere. Even his criticism was felt merely as definition and analysis. It had no bitterness or resentment in it.....No sentiment of dislike or contempt remained from his analysis, in the mind of the listener."

"The Swami's thought soared as he talked...Ideals were the units of our Master's thought, but ideals made so intensely living that one never thought of them as abstractions. Men and nations alike were interpreted by him through their ideals, their ethical up-reaching.....Recognising the two extremes of a quality, he never failed to discriminate also that point of junction between them, where, being exactly balanced, both might be said to be non-existent.....One never knew what he might see in a thing, never quite knew what might appeal to him. He would often speak in answer to thought, or respond to a thought more easily and effectively than to words. It was only gradually, from a touch here and a hint there, that one could gather the great pre-occupation, that all words and thoughts were designed to serve.....

"Constant devotion, then, was the means by which he maintained his unbroken concentration. Concentration was the secret of those incessant flashes of revelation which he was always giving. Like one who had plunged his cup into a deep well, and brought up from it water of a sparkling coldness, was his entrance into conversation. It was the quality of his thought, quite as much as its beauty or its intensity, that told of the mountain-snows of spiritual vision from which it had been drawn."

"He was very quick to recognise in others those seemingly instinctive actions that were really dictated by the higher wisdom of super-consciousness. The thing that was right, no one could tell why, while yet it would have seemed, judged by ordinary standards, to have been a mistake,—in such things he saw a higher impulsion. Not all ignorance was in his eyes equally dark."



## CXLII.

### THE MAN WITH A MESSAGE.

From his very youth the Swami had the intuitive knowledge of his high destiny, and he spoke to certain college-mates that he would chalk out a new path for himself. But it was after his training under his Master and after his first experience of Nirvikalpa Samadhi in the Cossipore garden, that he became convinced that he had a message to deliver and a mission to fulfil. By the term "mission" is meant a call coming not from an external agency, but proceeding from the inmost self which had realised Itself, a call heard faintly by a few saintly souls, and recognised in its true nature perhaps by one in a century, a call in which the man of genius finds his destiny determined and throws himself with all the force of his personality to make others share the vision vouchsafed to him. Such an one works not like the slave but like the Master. "He speaks like one having authority and not as the scribes." He literally transmits spirituality and his own fire to other souls. Such, indeed, have been the prophets of the world, and such, indeed, was the Swami Vivekananda.

The chief formulative influences that went to the determining of his vision may be classified generally under the following heads: His Master's great prophecies regarding him; his training and his Realisations; his knowledge of Western philosophies, history and Sanskrit scriptures; the constant study of the Divine life of his Guru before him in which he found the key to life and the verification of the Shastras; his travels all over his Motherland during which he availed himself of the constant opportunities of comparing her with what she had been and was, and of studying the life and thoughts of the people, their needs and possibilities, and the diversities of their customs and faiths; and

mixing with princes and peasants, saints and scholars, he "grasped in its comprehensiveness," as the Sister Nivedita says, "that vast whole of which his Master's life and personality had been a brief and intense epitome. These, then,—the Shastra, the Guru, and the Motherland,—are the three notes that mingle themselves to form the music of the works of Vivekananda. These are the treasure which it is his to offer."

As soon as the Swami found clear as noonday which way the path lay before him for the fructification of his ideas, he was seized with such a paroxysm of intense *rajas*, such a tremendous force surging within him and struggling for an outlet, that he felt as if he would burst, as he said to one of his Gurubhais. It was this mighty force that fell upon the world in its flood-tides of spirituality, destined to sweep away all that was weak and debasing, and bear in its contents all that was ennobling and life-giving. His extraordinary achievements bear eloquent testimony to the divine grace and power which he possessed, to the presence and working in him of that Unknown and Unknowable Power which shapes and controls the destinies of the world.

Of the significance of his advent at a critical moment of the world's religious history,—when materialism reigned supreme in the West and the prevailing forms of religion did not satisfy the yearning souls of advanced thought, and when in India Occidental thought and ideals forced themselves more and more irresistibly on the English-educated minds, shattering their faith in the race-culture and national heritage,—we need not dilate here. Suffice it to say that, what Hinduism needed was the organising and the consolidating of itself to meet the situation, and what the outside world stood in need of was a religion universal in its ideals and practice, which should embrace all the different types of minds and methods. As had happened many a time in the history of the world, with the need for this cosmic re-adjustment came the man, and with the man came the

opportunity of voicing forth the universal and the national consciousness. One signing himself "A", writes in *The Brahnavadin* as follows:—

"Certainly such a state of things could not last long and it called forth the Divine interference to set matters right and re-establish Dharma. Of course this is done through prophets and saints. The prophets and saints that came in the past served a particular section or community of people according to the then needs. But this time the case was different. The spread of Western education and the easy means of communication having knit the whole world together, a stronger and a more energetic person with sympathies as broad as the heaven, also was wanted. Again, with the advent of such a man an opportunity was also wanted, and fortunately the famous Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893 presented itself as the best and the fittest opportunity.

"It was a remarkable assemblage of great men, of not one country or continent but of the whole world. As such an assemblage was rare in the history of the world, so was a rare man from the far East who was destined to be present at it. It was there, the Swami was called to fulfil his extraordinary mission by proclaiming to the world the truth of what the seers of the Upanishads declared: 'That which exists is One; Sages call It variously.' Never did man proclaim this truth in a bolder language as the Swami did, and the effect which it produced was marvellous. This teaching aimed a blow at religious bigotry while tending to smoothen the 'friction of religions' with which the world was oppressed. The healthy and loving feeling which we enjoy at the present moment for each other's religion is not a little due to it."

In that one address of his on **Hinduism** before the Parliament of Religions, it may be said that Hinduism as defined by him in the language of the moderns, was invested with a new life. When he rose to speak invoking the blessings of the Supreme on himself and the vast audience, he found himself addressing the entire Occidental mind representing the modern consciousness. While behind him lay India, the Mother of religions, with her thousands of years of spiritual development and civilisation,—a world which had heard the hymns chanted by the Vedic Rishis in the dawn of time, a world to which all other religions and civilisations were almost as yesterday-born! And within him, these two gigantic rivers of thought mingled their waters, as it were, forming the point of confluence.

Such was the psychological area in which the Swami delivered the message of India to the world, a message of Universal religion to which every religion was "only a travelling, a coming-up, of different men and women through various conditions and circumstances to the same goal,"—a religion which proclaimed that 'man is to become divine by realising the divine.' How all-inclusive was the idea of Hinduism he preached! "From the highest spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the lowest ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists, and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion." And even as he voiced forth the message of his people, "in the youth and noonday of the West," in the words of the Sister Nivedita, "a nation, sleeping in the shadows of the darkened half of earth, on the far side of the Pacific, waited in spirit for the words that would be borne on the dawn that was travelling towards them, to reveal to them the secret of their own greatness and strength."

The message that the Swami delivered to the modern world of the West and to India, was his own interpretation of the philosophy and religion as embodied in the Sanskrit scriptures in the light of his own realisation, or to put it more definitely,—in the light shed upon them by his Master, who had attained the ultimate goal of each and all religions by going through the means and methods of each severally, and which light the Swami had assimilated in his own life by making it his very own. Thus it was that he wrote in a letter to a friend: "I have a message and I will give it after my own fashion. I will neither Hinduise my message, nor Christianise it, nor make it any 'ise' in the world. I will only my-ise it, and that is all."

In certain moods, when his consciousness bordered on the very highest realisation, or when in the more astonishing aspects of his personality as the Prophet, conscious of his Divine Mission, he might make such startling statements as



to overawe the intellectual audience before him. As for example, in Madras, when he was assailed with the question, how he could possibly reconcile the philosophical creeds of the Dvaita, Visishtadvaita and the Advaita, to accentuate the differences between which such great Acharyas as Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva and others had to resort to text-torturing, he thundered forth on the questioner with the words, "Because it was left for me to do it! Because I was born to show this to the world!" And the hushed audience felt the power of these words, as it heard the enunciation of the gradual stages of development in the three respective paths, and how they all converged into the effulgence of the Advaita consciousness. Once again, in the course of a debate with the Pandits at the court of the Rajah of Ramnad he declared, when challenged by them, "I *have* realised the Absolute in the superconscious state. I am the proof of the Vedas!"

His manliness was perfect and a veritable shining forth of strength. Once when an Englishman, thinking him a common Sadhu, abused him, his sole reply was, "I am Vivekananda! who are *you*?" These words were spoken with such majesty that the man, overawed, hung his head in shame. The power he had used to silence the impertinent Englishman had been this startling power of the manifested spirit.

All throughout his life as the Teacher, the Swami felt in the heart of his heart that the Lord was working through him for the fulfilment of a certain Divine Dispensation. Towards the end of the summer in Kashmir, he told some of his lady-disciples who were travelling with him, that he was always conscious of the form of the Mother, as a bodily presence, visible amongst them. Again, in his last winter, he told the Swami Swarupananda that for some months continuously, he had felt two hands always holding his own in their grasp.

And once he wrote to his *gurubhais* at the Math from America, "So long as you have the faith that the Lord is working through me, and will work through me so long

as I am in this body, you need have no fear of anything, no evil will befall you!" This consciousness made him dauntless in the face of difficulties and opposition, and made his faith unshakable in the ultimate triumph of the gospel of Truth and Realisation he preached. He knew that kicks and blows were inevitably the lot of those who went against the prevailing current and who embodied new ideas. But these oppositions only brought out the Man in him, and sometimes led him on, unconsciously, to make confidential revelations of his inmost personality and its realisations to his intimate friends and disciples. As for example, when an organised campaign of a virulent and malicious type was set on foot in the American organs chiefly by the Missionary bodies, after his return to India, he wrote a letter in a prophetic mood to an American disciple who had drawn his attention to the fact, and in sublime scorn of the world and its ways said among other things :—

"What are men?" He is with me, the Beloved. He was with me when I was in America, in England, when I was roaming about unknown from place to place in India. What do I care about what they talk—the babies, they do not know any better. What! I, who have realised the Spirit, and the vanity of all earthly nonsense, to be swerved from my path by babies' prattle?.....

"\*\*\* I feel my task is done—at most three or four years more of life is left. I have lost all wish for my salvation. I never wanted earthly enjoyments. I must see my machine in strong working order, and then knowing sure that I have put in a lever for the good of humanity, in India at least, which no power can drive back, I will sleep without caring what will be next; and may I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls,—and above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship.

"He Who is the high and the low, the saint and the sinner, the God and the worm, Him worship, the visible, the knowable, the real, the Omnipresent, and break all other idols.

"In Whom there is neither past life nor future birth, nor death nor going nor coming, in Whom we always have been and always will be one, Him worship, and break all other idols."

"My time is short. I have got to unbreast whatever I have to say,

without caring if it smarts some or irritates others. Therefore, my dear M—, do not be frightened at whatever drops from my lips, for the power behind me is not Vivekananda but He the Lord, and He knows best.....”

Verily, the West saw in him a new type of man, and India a new type of the Sannyasin ! No wonder that there were in the beginning strenuous opposition from a certain section of the one and gross misunderstanding from that of the other. But notwithstanding these there were hundreds and thousands who were yearning to have the thirst of their souls quenched by the waters of life, such as he carried unto them. To them he came as one of those rare souls who are born once in several centuries at critical periods of the world's religious history, to deliver the message of salvation to nations and individuals. His prophetic utterances and revelations coming out of the effulgence of the Soul remodelled Hinduism, created a revolution of thought in the religious world, and infused a new spirit into his countrymen awakening them to the consciousness of the glory and the greatness of their national ideals.

He never dreamt of failure or weakness. Succeed he always must, he said once, but before he achieved a success he had to pass every time through a valley of death. Conscious of the infinite power of the Spirit within, he moved among men a lordly soul, free and fearless, the bearer of a distinct message unto the modern world, an all-round character of the highest type whose genius shone forth in multiform ways, “the like of which,” as his Master had said, “had never visited this planet of ours !”

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## CXLIII.

### "THE PATRIOT-SAINT OF MODERN INDIA."

That the Swami Vivekananda will be regarded by posterity in India as the patriot of a unique type, must have been borne in upon the minds of those who have studied his life deeply, as recorded in these pages. Even in his very boyhood he had a sort of intuition which prompted his soul that he was born to help his country and his fellowmen. Even then he insisted, against the threats of his family, to go into the slums and help the poor, the ignorant and the outcast. Then in his youth came the conflict of the soul, and he passed through a terrible tempest of thought in quest of the realisation of the Supreme Reality, the ultimate goal of human existence, without knowing which life was not worth living. For several years his whole soul was consumed with this one idea. How he came out of the conflict victorious and gained the superconscious vision of the Reality, how he was made aware thereupon by his Master that he was born for even higher things than to remain immersed in Samadhi as the saints did, for like a huge Banyan tree he was to give shade and repose to thousands of weary travellers on their journey through the parched pathway of the *Samsara*,—are well known to the readers.

Subsequent to his Master's *Mahasamadhi*, he travelled all over India with a burning heart seeking for higher realisations, if there were any. and restless to find out for himself the form of the work that was to be his for the carrying out of the great trust imposed upon him by his Master. His vision widened, revelation came, he found the field of work opening out before him in a way he had never dreamt of before. He read the meaning of his Master's message to him in a light which assumed new and newer proportions with added knowledge and constant thought

and meditation. Yes, his was no doubt the spiritual mission, but how to practicalise it? Before him lay India dethroned from her past glory, with her three hundred millions sunk in poverty and ignorance, a hopelessly enervated and disorganised mass, lost to all faith in the future. His heart was rent in agony pondering over the deplorable condition of the masses, brought on mainly by the tyranny of priestcraft and the despotism of caste and custom. How to give them back their lost individuality and make them stand on their own feet again, with a new life and vigour pulsating through their veins, became the burden of his thought, the goal of his *sadhana*. It consumed him like a fever. It made him restless. He could not even sleep. He must find some practical ways and means of rousing them out of this living death.

At last, sitting on the last stone of his motherland in the temple of the Mother Kanyakumari at Cape Comorin, and brooding for hours on the present and the future of his country, the great light of inspiration came. In the anguish of his soul he asked himself the question, "What have we, several millions of Sannyasins, been doing for the masses? Teaching them metaphysics! It is all madness! It is a mockery to offer religion to a starving man. How can the millions rise, how can they be a power for good to society when they are starving?" Under the circumstances, the first thing necessary, he thought to himself, was to improve their material condition and give them education along this line. The second thing is, "We as a nation have lost our individuality, and that is the cause of all mischief in India. The tyrants, and worst among them the priests, have sucked their life-blood and trampled them under foot for ages upon ages, till they have forgotten that they are men like ourselves, and the inevitable result is the slavery of a thousand years. Again, the force to raise them must come from inside, that is, from the orthodox Hindus. In every country the evil exists not with but against religion. Religion, therefore, is not to blame, but men. In order to

remedy this evil, the first thing wanted is men, the second, money." He was confident that by the grace of his *guru*, who had laid upon his shoulder a great mission,—that of helping his fellowmen,—he will get workers by the hundreds, fired with his own zeal of laying down their lives in this great cause. But who would give him money? He had gone to the rich and the princes seeking for aid and received only lip sympathy. He determined not to depend upon any one in India, but to cross the ocean and go to the West in the name of the poor, the low and the downtrodden masses of his country. There he would earn money by the power of his brain, and in exchange give spirituality to the men and women there, and returning to his country would devote the rest of his days to the realisation of this one aim of his life.

Thus argued the Swami Vivekananda in that hour of supreme insight, sitting on the last stone of his motherland, after fulfilling his vow of making the pilgrimage of India from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin! Verily, in that hour of inspiration he found his mission at last, and felt a call from on High to consecrate his life, his realisation, his all and everything to the spreading of the Light of the Sanatana Dharma for the good of the world at large, with a perfect assurance that it was destined to react on his motherland in the form of a reborn Self-consciousness, and above all, make the path clear and practical for him to carry out his plans for the amelioration of the condition of the masses, who are the backbone of the nation. Before that prophetic vision of his, at Kanyakumari, of India crowned with a greater glory than she had ever been, even the desire for Mukti, or the bliss of Brahman was rejected. In that moment of supreme compassion and infinite anguish over the lot of India's poor, he was like another Buddha, ready to give up his life for the meanest of his countrymen. To him the poor and the distressed were the only visible, the only tangible God to be served with his life's blood, in the spirit of worship. Verily, the Swami was a

patriot and a saint in one, the like of which had never been known in India! In him, patriotism was, indeed, deified into the highest saintship, and loving service to fellowmen, into true worship. Patriotism with him meant the transfiguration or merging of one's whole personality into the soul of his people, rising or sinking with them. In his famous lecture on "My Plan of Campaign", in stating his ideal of patriotism he gave an insight into what mental sufferings he had himself experienced in thinking of the present condition of the masses, and what course he had adopted to be of help to them, in these burning words :—

"They talk of patriotism. I believe in patriotism, and I also have my own ideal of patriotism...First feel from the heart...Through the heart comes inspiration. Love opens the most impossible gates ; love is the gate to all the secrets of the universe. Feel, therefore, my would-be reformers; my would-be patriots ! Do you feel ? Do you feel that millions and millions of the descendants of Gods and of sages, have become next-door neighbours to brutes ? Do you feel that millions are starving to-day, and millions have been starving for ages ? Do you feel that ignorance has come over the land as a dark cloud ? Does it make you restless ? Does it make you sleepless ? Has it gone into your blood, coursing through your veins, becoming consonant with your heart-beats ? Has it made you almost mad ? Are you seized with that one idea of the misery of ruin, and have you forgotten all about your name, your fame, your dearest ones, your property, even your own bodies ? Have you done that ? That is the first step to become a patriot, the very first step. I did not go to America, as most of you know, for the Parliament of Religions, but this demon of a feeling, was in me and within my soul. I travelled twelve years all over India, finding no way to work for my countrymen, and that is why I went to America. Most of you know that who knew me then. Who cared about this Parliament of Religions ? Here was my own flesh and blood sinking every day, and who cared for them ? This was my first step."

His letters from America to his Indian disciples, before and after his brilliant triumph at the Parliament of Religions, reveal to some extent the passionate ardour and the intensity of his feelings for the sinking masses in India and his stirring charge to his countrymen, and his disciples in particular, to do something practical for their betterment:

Several extracts from these epistles may be quoted here to show the heart of the man and his indomitable faith in himself. That written from Metcalf, Mass., dated 20th August 1893, reads as follows:—

“\* \* \* A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor, the fallen and the downtrodden, should go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising-up, —the gospel of equality. \* \* \*

“Despair not.....Gird up your loins, my boys. I am called by the Lord for this. I have been dragged through a whole life full of crosses and tortures. I have seen the nearest and dearest die almost of starvation. I have been ridiculed, distrusted, and have suffered for my sympathy for the very men who scoff and scorn. Well, my boys, this is the school of misery, which is also the school for great souls and prophets for the cultivation of sympathy, of patience, and above all, of an indomitable iron will which quakes not even if the universe be pulverised at our feet. \* \* \*

“Trust not to the rich, they are more dead than alive. The hope lies in you—in the meek, the lowly, but the faithful. Have faith in the Lord; no policy, it is nothing. Feel for the miserable and look up for help—*it shall come*. I have travelled twelve years with this load in my heart and this idea in my head. I have gone from door to door of the so-called rich and great, but they heard me not. With a bleeding heart I have crossed half the world to this strange land seeking for help. The Lord is great. I know He will help me. I may perish of cold or hunger in this land, but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed. Go now, this minute, to the temple of Parthasarathi, and before Him who was friend to the poor and lowly cowherds of Gocool, who never shrank from embracing the Pariah Gubak, who accepted the invitation of a prostitute in preference to that of the nobles and saved her in His Incarnation of Buddha,—yea, down on your faces before Him and make a great sacrifice,—the sacrifice of a whole life for them, for whom He comes from time to time, whom He loves above all, the poor, the lowly, the oppressed. Vow then to devote your whole lives to the cause of the redemption of these three hundred millions, going down and down every day.

“It is not the work of a day, and the path is full of deadly thorns. But Parthasarathi is ready to be our Sarathi, we know that; and in His name and with eternal faith in Him, set fire to the mountain mass of misery that has been heaped upon India for ages—and it shall be burned



down. Come then, look it in the face, brethren, it is a grand task and we are so low. But we are the sons of Light and children of God. Glory unto the Lord, we will succeed.....I may die here unsuccessful, another will take up the task.....Faith,—sympathy, fiery faith and fiery sympathy! Life is nothing, death is nothing,—hunger nothing, cold nothing! Glory unto the Lord—march on, the Lord is our General.....”

Mark the inherent faith and the indomitable hope of the man voiced forth in his utterance in the above letter, written amidst the temporal vicissitudes of his early days in America before his epoch-making appearance at the Parliament of Religions, when sometimes he did not know where to turn for shelter or his next meal! Such an unwavering assuredness of the ultimate success even when everything about one seems dark, such a deep unspoken consciousness of greatness, shines only in those souls who are born to fulfil a certain mission for the uplifting of humanity. This letter is a valuable document in vindication of the fact that the Swami's faith in the regeneration of his people, and in the part he was to play in it, was something innate, intuitive and unshakeable, proceeding from the firm conviction or rather prophetic vision, that it was the will of the Lord and hence inevitable, and that he was called upon by Him to accomplish it. In his letter from Chicago, dated 24th January, 1894, Swamiji writes :—

“••• Remember, the whole gist of our force is—the elevation of the masses without injuring religion. Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. But, alas, nobody ever did anything for them. Our modern reformers are very busy about widow re-marriage. Of course I am a sympathiser in every reform, but the fate of a nation does not depend upon the number of husbands their widows get, but *upon the condition of the masses*. Can you raise them? Can you give them back their lost individuality, without making them lose their innate spiritual nature? Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work, and energy, and at the same time a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts? This is to be done and *we will do it*. You are all *born to do it*. Have faith in yourselves; great convictions are the mothers of great deeds. Onward for ever! Sympathy for the poor, the down-trodden, even unto death,—this is our motto. Onward, brave lads!

"Preach the idea of elevating the masses by means of a Central College, and by bringing education as well as religion to the door of the poor by means of missionaries trained in this College."

Writing to a disciple from Washington on 27th October, 1894, he says :—

"Do you love your fellowmen? Where else should you go to seek for God? Are not all the poor, the miserable, the weak—Gods? Why not worship them first? Why go to dig a well on the shores of the Ganges?.....Have you love? You are omnipotent. Are you perfectly unselfish? You are irresistible.....Your country requires heroes. Be heroes.....My son, I believe in God and I believe in man. I believe in helping the miserable. I believe in going even to hell to serve others."

To quote from one more letter :—

"Let each one of us pray day and night for the downtrodden millions in India, who are held fast by poverty, priestcraft and tyranny. I do not care to preach religion to the high and the rich. I am no metaphysician, no philosopher, nay, no saint. But I am poor, I love the poor.....They cannot come to light, to education. Who will bring the light to them—who will travel from door to door bringing education to them? Let these be your God,—think of them, work for them, pray for them incessantly—the Lord will show you the way. Him I call a Mahatman, whose heart bleeds for the poor, otherwise he is a Duratman. Let us unite our wills in continued prayer for their good. We may die unknown, unpitied, unbewailed, without accomplishing anything; but not one thought will be lost. It will take effect sooner or later. My heart is too full to express my feeling. You know it, you can imagine it. So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor, who having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them. I call those men—who strut about in their finery having got all their money by grinding the poor,—wretches, so long as they do not do anything for those two hundred millions who are now no better than hungry savages! We are poor, my brothers, we are no-bodies, but such have been always the instruments of the Most High."

From the foregoing it will be seen that the Swami was not fired with patriotism by his residence in, and contact with, the West, howsoever these might have widened his vision and suggested to his thoughtful mind some of the practical applications of his plans for the uplifting of the Indian nation through its own national ideals and purpose, which have been ever spiritual, and not political or com-

mercial like those of the West. Indeed, the Swami's great love for his country has been witnessed throughout his life, and even long before his public career; only, later on, this love took a practical as well as learned turn. His whole life speaks of a passionate love of his country and a worshipping of his country even as his God. The whole character of his Mission to India was the amelioration of his country's condition, so that it might again become the teacher of the world in spirituality. "Woman and the People!" was his cry. His heart and mind were with the great poverty-stricken, ignorant and afflicted masses. For their sake he said he would die in harness, working to the end for their good. Verily to the Indian, there was to be nothing so glorious as the Mother Herself, separated from all others by the highest mountain walls and by the expansive seas, and yet the Teacher of the World. What a commingling of agony and ecstasy is seen in his life and words as he views respectively the present misery and the future brightness of the land! Verily, like unto him there have been few patriots. He himself said that he had to make mortar of his very blood, as it were, for the laying of every brick in the building of the monastery at Belur. True, but it is still more true that his life's blood, his body, brains and his very self had been offered up to the Spirit of India itself in that Yajna, in connection with which the powerful *mantrams* used are already bringing into being the form and spirit of a *Prabuddha Bharata* or Awakened India.

To him everything Indian was holy. There were times when the Swami's patriotism and his interpretation of the customs of his people were touched almost with tears. A notable incident was when he rebuked a Western disciple who had told him that the Christian Missionaries were displaying, aboard the vessel in which he made his second trip to the West, some silver wedding-bracelets they had purchased from famine-stricken Tamil women, and who incidentally spoke of the superstition current both in the East and West about parting with the wedding ring. "You

call it superstition?" the Swami asked in a sad and astonished tone. "You cannot see the great ideal of chastity behind!" In the same way he would explain the so-called idolatry, Man-worship and even fetichism with such a convincing force of reasoning and insight as to give a new revelation on the subject discussed, always siding himself with the criticised and the condemned. Once when it was suggested to him that he did not surely approve of the fetichism of the aborigines, he answered, "I do not know what fetichism is!" When the questioner mistaking his reply for ignorance pointed out that the object is alternately worshipped, beaten and thanked, he exclaimed:—

"I myself do that! Don't you see that there is no fetichism? Oh, your hearts are steeled, that you cannot see that the child is right! The child sees persons everywhere. Knowledge robs us of the child's vision. But at last, through higher knowledge we win back to it. He connects a living power with rocks, sticks, trees and the rest. And is there not a living Power behind them? Can you not see, it is symbolism, not fetichism."

"To the customs of his own people", as says the Sister Nivedita, "he brought the eye of a poet and the imagination of a prophet.....The plain white veil of the widow was to him the symbol of holiness as well as sorrow. The Gerrua rags of the Sannyasin, the mat on the floor for a bed, the green leaf instead of a plate, eating with the fingers, the use of the national costume, all these things he appeared to regard as a veritable consecration. Each of them whispered to him some secret of spiritual power or human tenderness."

And one remembers in this connection the passionate exhortation to his countrymen that he made in the concluding words of his book called "Modern India," which reveal at once the idealistic devotion with which he held his Motherland and her time-honoured institutions and ideals, and also his love for his poor, ignorant and destitute brother-Indians:—

"Oh India! Forget not—that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sita, Savitri, Damayanti; forget not—that the God thou worshippest is the great Ascetic of ascetics, the all-renouncing Sankara, the Lord of Uma; forget not—that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasure,—are not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not—

that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar ; forget not—that thy social order is but the reflex of the Infinite Universal Motherhood ; forget not—that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper, are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian,—and proudly proclaim,—‘I am Indian,—every Indian is my brother.’ Say,—‘The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahman Indian, the Pariah Indian is my brother.’ Thou too clad with but a rag round thy loins proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice,—‘The Indian is my brother,—the Indian is my life, India's Gods and Goddesses are my God, India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred haven, the *Varanasi* of my old age’. Say, brother,—‘The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good,’ and repeat and pray day and night,—‘O Thou Lord of Gouri, O Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me ‘ O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and—MAKE ME MAN !’

It would be well to conclude this chapter by making some lengthy extracts from the Sister Nivedita's book in which from the unique opportunities that presented themselves to her, she closely analyses the dual aspect of the Swami's genius as a lover of his country and as a teacher of the highest religion, with the inevitable struggle it meant to a Sannyasin like him to reconcile both these conflicting ideals in his realisation of a new order of things, She writes in part as follows in “The Master As I Saw Him” :—

‘In the West, the Swami had revealed himself to us as a religious teacher only.....It is true that in a place or two one had seen a great patriot...It was as the apostle of Hinduism, not as a worker for India, that we saw the Swami in the West...

“From the moment of my landing in India, however, I found some thing quite unexpected underlying all this ..It was the personality of the Master himself, in all the fruitless torture and struggle of a lion caught in a net...But wherein lay the struggle ? Whence came the frequent sense of being baffled and thwarted ? Was it a growing consciousness of bodily weakness conflicting with the growing clearness of a great purpose?...Banished to the Himalayas with shattered health, at the very moment when his power had reached its height, he had written a letter to an English friend which was a cry of despair.

“To what was the struggle actually due ? Was it the terrible effort of translating what he had called the super-conscious’ into the common

life ? Undoubtedly he had been born to a task which was in this respect of heroic difficulty. Nothing in this world is so terrible as to abandon the safe paths of accepted ideals, in order to work out some new realisation, by methods apparently in conflict with the old...Certainly in years to come, in the last five and a half years, particularly, which were his crowning gift to his own people, he stood for work without attachment, or work for impersonal ends, as one of the highest expressions of the religious life. And for the first time in the history of India an order of monks found themselves banded together, with their faces set primarily towards the evolution of new forms of civic duty. In Europe...such labour ranks as devotional in the common acceptance. But in India, the head and front of the demand made on a monastic order is that it produce saints....

"In the Swami's scheme of things, however, it would almost seem as if such tasks were to take that place in the spiritual education which had previously been occupied by systems of devotion...Worship is thus regarded as the school, or preparation, for higher stages of spiritual development. But the self-same sequence would seem to have held good in the eyes of the Swami, with regard to work, or the service to man .... Thus he hallowed the act of aid, and hallowed, to, the name of man... The nursing of the sick and the feeding of the poor, had indeed from the first been natural activities of the Children of Ramakrishna. But when the Swami returned from the West these things took on a larger aspect. They were considered from a national point of view. Men would be sent out from the monastery to give relief in famine-stricken areas, to direct the sanitation of a town, or to nurse the sick and the dying at a pilgrim centre . ...These (workers) were, said the Swami, the 'sappers and miners' of the army of religion. His schemes however went much further. He was consumed with a desire for the education of Indian women, and for the scientific and technical education of the country. How the impersonal motive multiplies the power to suffer, only those who have seen can judge....

'His view was penetrative as well as comprehensive. He had analysed the elements of the development to be brought about. India must learn a new ideal of obedience. The Math was placed, therefore, on a basis of 'organisation which was contrary to all the current ideas of religious freedom ....The energy which had hitherto gone into the mortification of the body, might rightly, in his opinion, under modern conditions, be directed to the training of the muscles.

".....Long ago, he had defined the mission of the Order of Ramakrishna as that of realising and exchanging the highest ideals of the East and of the West. And assuredly he here proved his own power to engage in such an undertaking as much by his gift of learning as by

that of teaching. But it was inevitable that he himself should from time to time go through the anguish of revolt. The Hindu ideal of the religious life, as a reflection on earth of that of the Great God in the Divine Empyrean,—the Unmoving, the Untouched, 'pure, free, ever the Witness'—is so clear and so deeply established that only at great cost to himself could a man carry it into a fresh channel.... Occasionally to one who was much with him, a word, let fall unconsciously, would betray the inner conflict.....—'I have become entangled,' he said simply, to one who protested that to his mind the wandering Sadhu of earlier years who had scattered his knowledge and changed his name as he went, had been greater than the Abbot of Belui, burdened with much work and many cares. 'I have become entangled' And I remember the story told by an American woman, who said she could not bear to remember his face, at that moment when her husband explained to this strange guest that he must make his way from their home to Chicago with money which would be paid gladly to hear him speak of religion. 'It was,' she said, 'as if something had just broken within him that could never again be made whole'... ..

"And so, side by side with that sun-lit serenity and child-like peace which enwrapped the Swami as a religious teacher, I found in his own country another point of view, from which he was very, very human. And here, though the results of his efforts may have been choicer, or more enduring, than those of most of us, yet they were wrought at the self-same cost of having to toil on in darkness and uncertainty, and only now and then emerging into light. Often dogged by the sense of failure, often overtaken by a loathing of the limitations imposed alike by the instrument and the material, he dared less and less, as years went on to make determinate plans, or to dogmatise about the unknown. 'After all, what do we know?' he said once, 'Mother uses it all. But we are only fumbling about.'

"This has not perhaps been an element in the lives of the great teachers on which their narrators have cared to dwell much. Yet one catches a hint of it in the case of Sri Ramkrishna, when we are told how he turned on God with the reproach, Oh Mother! What is this You have brought me to? All my heart is centred in these lads! And in the eleventh chapter of the Dhammapada one can see still, though twenty-four centuries have passed since then, the wave-marks of similar storms on the shores of the consciousness of another Teacher.

"There was one thing, however, deep in the Master's nature, that he himself never knew how to adjust. This was the love of his country and his resentment of her suffering. Throughout those years in which I saw him almost daily, the thought of India was to him like the air he breathed. True, he was a worker at foundations. He neither used the

word 'nationality,' nor proclaimed an era of 'nation-making'. 'Man-making,' he said, was his own task. But he was born a lover, and the queen of his adoration was his Motherland. Like some delicately-poised bell, thrilled and vibrated by every sound that falls upon it, was his heart of all that concerned her. Not a sob was heard within her shores that did not find in him a responsive echo. There was no cry of fear, no tremor of weakness, no shrinking from mortification, that he had not known or understood. He was hard on her sins, unsparing of her want of worldly wisdom, but only because he felt these faults to be his own, and none, on the contrary, was ever so possessed by the vision of her greatness. To him, she appeared as the giver of English civilisation. For what, he would ask, had been the England of Elizabeth in comparison with the India of Akbar? Nay what would the England of Victoria have been, without the wealth of India behind her? Where would have been her refinement? Where would have been her experience? His country's religion, history, geography, ethnology, poured from his lips in an unbroken stream.... One might note the unwearied stream of analysis of the laws regarding female inheritance, or the details of caste customs in different provinces, or some abstruse systems of metaphysics,' or theology, proceeding on and on for a couple of hours longer.

"In these talks of his, the heroism of the Rajput, the faith of the Sikh, the courage of the Mahratta, the devotion of the saints, and the purity and the steadfastness of noble women, all lived again. Nor would he permit that the Mohammedan should be passed over. Humayoon, Sher Shah, Akbar, Shah Jehan, each of these, and a hundred more, found a day and a place in his bead-roll of glistening names.....

Like some great spiral of emotion, its lowest circles held last in love of soil and love of nature; its next embracing every possible association of race, experience history, and thought and the whole converging and centring upon a single definite point, was thus the Swami's worship of his own land. And the point in which it was focussed was the conviction that India was not old and effete, as her critics had supposed, but young, ripe with potentiality, and standing, at the beginning of the twentieth century, on the threshold of even greater developments that she had known in the past. Only once, however, do I remember him to have given utterance to this thought. I feel myself, he said in a moment of great quiet, to be the man born after many centuries. *I see that India is young.* But in truth this vision was implied in every word he ever spoke. It throbbed in every story he told. And when he would lose himself, in splendid scorn of apology for anything Indian, in fiery repudiation of false charge or contemptuous criticism, or in laying down for others the elements of a faith and love couldn ever be more than a pale reflection of his own, how often did the habit of the



monk seem to slip away from him, and the armour of the warrior stand revealed !

"But it is not to be supposed that he was unaware of the temptation which all this implied...As one who has forsworn them will struggle against thoughts of home and family, he would endeavour, time and again, to restrain and suppress these thoughts of country and history, and to make of himself only that poor, religious wanderer, to whom all countries and all races should be alike.

"He was always striving to be faithful to the banner of Ramakrishna, and the utterance of a message of his own seemed often to strike him as a lapse. Besides, he believed that force spent in mere emotion was dissipated, only force restrained being conserved for expression in work. Yet again the impulse to give all he had would overtake him, and before he knew it he would once more be scattering those thoughts of hope and love for his race and for his country, which, apparently without his knowledge, fell in so many cases like seed upon soil prepared for it and have sprung up already, in widely distant parts of India, into hearts and lives of devotion to the Motherland. Just as Sri Ramakrishna, in fact, without knowing any books, had been a living epitome of the Vedanta, so was Vivekananda of the national life. But of the theory of this he was unconscious. In his own words, applied to his Master, "He was contented simply to live that great life, and to leave it to others to find the explanation."

May one never suppose, from certain portions in the above extracts, that the Swami betrayed moral weakness by holding on to something which he sometimes regarded, what the Sister says, "as a lapse" from his Master's teachings, and which he himself never knew how to adjust. The Swami was veritably a living paradox. It was most difficult to understand him in his varied moods, or the true purpose of his utterances sometimes let fall in private circles, which were contrary to his ideas spoken in public. In certain moods he would burst out into an open revolt even against Sri Ramakrishna, but that did not mean that he had lost the least bit of love and faith in him. In certain moods when he would be seized with a passionate longing to break all bonds and fly unto the highest, he would say that his works and activities as a religious teacher and preacher were all vanity, and superimpositions upon his true nature. But that did not unnerve his spirit of work and lead him to retire

into a cave. Viewed from the highest standpoint, all work, even that of doing good to others, is no doubt Maya, a hindrance to personal Mukti. But illumined souls like Vivekananda who belong, in the words of his Master, to the class of *Acharyakotis* or World-Teachers are born to take upon their shoulders the burden of a whole world. They care not for their own Mukti, or for remaining merged in the bliss of the Absolute, though these are within their reach. They would of their own free will be born again and again to help their fellowmen realise the Supreme, themselves ready to undergo untold sufferings for the latter's sake. When Sri Ramakrishna experienced the conflict in his soul, though for a few moments only, in his perplexity to reconcile his superconscious realisations with his heart being "centred in these lads," he found the solution in his vision that it was because he saw Narayan Himself in them and exclaimed in triumph, "The day I shall not see Narayana in you, I shall not look upon your faces again." The same might be said with regard to the Swami Vivekananda. Because he saw Narayana in the poor, the lowly, and the distressed, therefore he could give away his life for their regeneration. Besides, he not only felt instinctively that it was the work of the Lord, but he knew intuitively from his deepest realisations, that he was called upon by the Lord for the fulfilment of a higher destiny for his country, in the wake of which the divine Message of his Master, the vitalised gospel of the Sanatana Dharma, would spread, as it would in no other way, uplifting the whole human race. And we find him writing, with the same patriotic zeal as ever, towards the end of his life : "My life's allegiance is to this my Motherland, and if I had a thousand lives, every moment of the whole series would be consecrated to your service, my countrymen, my friends."

The great motto of the Swami was, "Renounce and Serve!" Renunciation of personal advantage and comfort, renunciation even of life, renunciation even of salvation, so long as the NATION lives. Everything must be done for the masses. The unnumbered suffering millions cry out for help.

Responsibility points to the task of aiding and relieving the dread misery. The true Indian, the Swami held, is he who knows the greatness of his land, its culture, its beauty, its oneness, its potentialities, its realities, who has made himself useful in its cause, who feels himself at oneness with the millions, who makes their sufferings, their joys and their aspirations his very own, who is proud of his birth, versed in the history of the past, confident in its present and its future, bold and courageous in the cause of righteousness, defiant in the defence of the traditions of the forefathers, whose God is his country, whose country is his God, and the watchword of whose heart is, "INDIA, INDIA, INDIA !"

Thus in the Swami Vivekananda we find a truly inspired patriot-saint, who deserves to be ranked as the foremost among the national workers of the modern age. He was an interpreter of the Soul of India to her own children and to the World,—the bearer of the message of ancient India to new Western nations, and the bearer as well of the message of India that-is-to-be to India as she is at present. In his ideal and practice of patriotism there was no place for the elements of hatred and distrust of the alien and its culture. In his vision he saw the day must come when India will rise, self-conscious of her high destiny, to fulfil the great mission of spiritualising the whole human race, making of man the animal into man the divine, and to the realisation of that end he devoted his whole life and soul, moving among the nations of the world as the herald of Light, Love, Peace and Harmony.

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## CXLIV.

### THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS LIFE AND WORK.—I.

“The Swami Vivekananda was”, says an eminent writer, “the choicest product of the age, one of those distinguished sons of India, who are bound to appear time after time for keeping up the spiritual dignity of the land of sages. He was Nature’s device for the readjustment and reinvigoration of the Indian national life.” “He has his best memorial,” says a lecturer, ‘in the new born love for the things of the Spirit which, through his efforts, characterises Hindu society of the present day.” Even a foreign critic as the Special Commissioner who was deputed by *The Daily News* to study the situation in India a few years ago wrote to that paper, “in Vivekanada, famous on both sides of the Atlantic by his lectures, we have a singularly powerful embodiment of the renascent Indian Ideal.” When there was confusion of ideals, when the sons of India were losing faith in their mission in life and abandoned themselves to the mercy of the surging tide of materialism, when the proud nations of the West came to dictate civilisation to India and lead her to light, the ever-watchful Lord of compassion sent forth His messenger once more, to awaken her to her glorious heritage and spread her unquenchable light of truth to humanity at large.

Before the Swami’s appearance as the apostle of Hinduism, Europeanism was hailed as the sole salvation for India. India’s literature, India’s civilisation and India’s religion were alike regarded by the lovers of India as a dried-up and exhausted fountain. The best minds of the land, who were fired with the zeal of doing good to her, turned for their inspiration to the oracles of the West, and tried in frantic despair to inoculate themselves and others of their country-

men with the Western culture. If there was any one who strove to reveal the spirit of Hindu civilisation and undertook the arduous task of restoring to the Hindus self-confidence and self reliance, and also of appealing to their philosophy and religion for the reconstruction of themselves and the nation, it was the Swami Vivekananda. He unearthed and laid bare before India's sons the inestimable treasure-chests of their ancient spirituality, and acquainted them with the intricate workings of their keys, calling them to their guardianship.

Intensely patriotic, yet not blind to the demands of the larger humanity ; full of reverence for the past, yet keenly alive to the changed circumstances of the present, lion-hearted and yet generous, gifted with a genius at once versatile and prophetic, the Swami was the discoverer of India's long-lost mission in the world. Steeped in all the rationalistic ideas of the day, fully imbibing the selflessness preached in the Gita, and laying down his whole life at the altar of service for his country in whose destiny he had an unbounded faith, the Swami Vivekananda stands out as a valiant patriot, championing India and her religion to the world. To what extent one great soul can be the saviour of one's own country, is more than illustrated in him.

These are some of the views recorded by his own countrymen in their writings and lectures.

What tremendous conflict of ideals the Swami encountered in his soul to realise the truths of Hinduism, what wonderful preparations he passed through in finding the mission of his life, what part Sri Ramakrishna played in the making of the Vivekananda and giving him to the world, what unique opportunities the Swami had in studying the mission of his country and its problems,—all these are well-known to the readers of these volumes. To point out their national significance, however, within a short compass here, we cannot do better than to reproduce the following portions from a beautiful article which appeared in the Prabuddha Bharatā in its issue of February-March, 1914 :—

"It was in the fitness of things that in the Swami Vivekananda a divine messenger was given to India in modern times. The Swami loved his country from his boyhood, and it was a love such as only a heart like his, quite an ocean in its depth and sweep, was capable of. Such patriotism can never be the outcome of any training ; it is inborn. Such perfect identification of self with the country can be accounted for only when we understand how in the birth of a Vivekananda, the very soul of his country finds itself bodied forth. In the episode of such a life, the achievement, the promise, the hope and the mission of a whole country become reflected and epitomised, and the Swami Vivekananda may well be said to have carried and embodied within himself from his birth the collective Indian consciousness. So it was really through Norendra, when sitting at his feet, that his Master got hold of the whole of India and through India the whole of mankind.

"In his Master again, Norendra found the India of his heart interpreting herself. All his college study in history, all his participation in public life, had never conjured up in his mind a vision of India so real, so brilliant, so glorious as that which forth through his Master. Oh Here was India seated in all her glory, the Mother of religions ! Here through this wonderful drama of his Master's life, she was recounting and generalising her past experiences and achievements such as only and really counted with her through centuries and centuries of surface-waves on Time which we call history. Here India was recording in living, tangible, indelible character her real history in the past and her destined role in the future. This vision smote Norendra's soul with the fire of prophecy and henceforth the consciousness grew in him that he had a message to bear to India and also to mankind on her behalf. And we all know how as the necessary outfit, the divine messenger obtained, along with his high commission, the highest and heartiest gift which Mother India makes to her son, the gift of the Vedic salvation.

"The vision of India deepened in colour and expression before the mind of the Swami Vivekananda through all the years of travel over his country and the impulse to serve and worship her deepened as well. During these travels as an itinerant monk, the sights of distress, misery and ignorance tapped the inmost springs in his heart of love and sympathy for the Indian masses, and the realisation of God as manifested in his fellow-creatures came to him with a force that spurred on the mightiest impulse for service. Oh ! For a proper opening to be vouchsafed to him now that he might set to work for his beloved people ! His whole soul was burning with anguish and impatience when he received the call to go over to the West. \* \* \* \* \*

"We have seen above that the very first step in this great preparation of one who was to be the truest messenger from On High to his country, was the acquisition of the spirituality and wisdom which India stands for in the world and which define and interpret her mission and life-history. The second step was a wonderful widening of the heart and quickening of the noblest impulses, and the third step would be a clear understanding and discrimination of the methods, the ways and means. This last step the Swami Vivekananda was enabled to take through his direct experience of the world, its many nations and their peculiarities of thought and action.

"So after all this thorough preparation, when on the 15th of January 1897, the Swami Vivekananda landed in Colombo and stood before his countrymen, the hero of the Chicago Parliament of Religions and the greatest modern prophet from India to the world outside, the time was full when his message to his country was to be unburdened. And in speech after speech informed with nothing short of divine inspiration and unparalleled in their depth and earnestness of thought and expression, the message went forth from that 'orator by divine right,' ringing clear and straight to the dormant hearts of his countrymen."

If one wants to know the trend of things in Modern India, if one wishes to sound the heart of India of to-day, it is imperative for him to acquaint himself with the Swami Vivekananda's "Lectures from Colombo to Almora," especially those delivered in Madras. It was at this city where the pitch of enthusiasm was aroused by him in the long march of triumph from Colombo to Almora. Like the embodiment of the nation itself, bursting with the effort to express its insight and its potentialities, was the spirit of the Swami Vivekananda in Madras. What the success at the Parliament of Religions was to his American work,—that and much more was his campaign in Madras to his work in Hindusthan. His ideas at the Parliament had electrified the Western world; his ideas given out in Madras aroused the latent energies of the Indian nation. Recognised in the West as the arch-prophet of Hinduism as a religion, he was much more recognised in Madras as the arch-prophet of Hinduism in its birth in a new era of citizenship and nationality. Like some God above the masses of his people inspired, as it were, by the spirit of India itself, he is seen in Madras thundering forth to Indians their greatnesses and their weaknesses as

well,—now reminding them of their glorious heritage and the still more glorious destiny they were to fulfil in the future, now admonishing them like a Guru, like a father, ever jealous of guarding the interests and well-being of disciples and children, and pointing out the evils of their mistaken course, the dangers ahead and the path to their salvation as a nation. He endeavoured to rouse them into supreme activity and raise them in the estimation of the nations of the world. He made them self-conscious, proud of their past, and hopeful of their future. He was unsparing in pointing out to them their faults and defects, he made them ashamed of their weakness and impotency, and bade them gird up their loins. He it was who blew into a flame the dying embers of spirituality in the drooping spirits of his people, ushering in a religious as well as a national awakening, reminding them of the historical fact that in India no great national development was possible without a spiritual awakening of the race.

In the making of Modern India, in the welding together of a unity in this country, no one has played so great and so inspiring a part as the Swami Vivekananda. Returning from America, he recast the contents of Indian philosophy so as to meet the present-day needs and difficulties. Even those who were antagonistic to him admitted that he was a man with consummate genius for national reconstruction. He interpreted the principles of the Vedanta not in the light of the seventh or eleventh century, or of the Shastris and Pandits, but in the light of the nineteenth or twentieth century, or to be more definite, in the light of the needs of his people, as was the way with the prophets and Acharyas of old.

It was the Swami who pointed out that the hypnosis of centuries of subjection had led India into such weakness that her great strength had been quite forgotten in self-commiseration. His call to the Indian peoples rang out: "Back to the Upanishads! Back to the strengthening, life-giving teachings of the Upanishads!" "He who thinks that he is weak is weak; he who believes that he is strong is already invincible."



"Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the goal is reached !" Having assimilated the *strength* of the Upanishads, Indians would arise anew. The sense of the superiority of their culture would re-energise their faculties, abolish the hypnosis that had come by over-whelming foreign contact and create a point around which all India could rehabilitate itself.

His watchword was, Dynamic Religion and United India. "The common ground that we have is our sacred traditions, our religion." With this in mind he proclaimed the necessity of a United India, and he said, "National union in India must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces. A nation in India must be a union of those whose hearts beat to the same spiritual tune." To such an ideal as this, politics was exceedingly relative. The very life of India was its spirituality ; that revived, details would take care of themselves.

Nationality, to the Swami's mind, was not a political supremacy, or the acquisition of rights and privileges, to have a voice in the government of the country, but a sacred ideal, "whose inmost striving was to express its own conception of ideal manhood." In this sphere, man-making, he said, was all the task to which he wanted to devote himself. Aloof as he stood from the political significance of Nationality, the picture that it called up to his mind was a unity to be realised more of heart and spirit than of the mind, a unity which he found already existing, though it had to be corradiated to a common and practical purpose for the fulfilment of the Indian national ideal—which had ever been, and should ever be, spirituality. He never preached nationality, but he was the very personification of its *true* Indian spirit.

Strength, courage, fearlessness, and service, with the Lord as the magnet of all work, which characterise true Manhood and true Womanhood, were the Swami Vivekananda's ideals for the peoples of India. It was a wonderful discovery of his that manliness might be the whole of piety. It was a survey of life, most comprehensive and far-reaching that he offered

to the Indian peoples as a veritable treasury of religious truth. This manliness is *Dharma*, or righteousness itself, which is the natural blossom of a life expressing itself in all circumstances as strength and fearlessness to follow and uphold whatever is true and uplifting. Not to grovel in the dust with the debasing idea of one's weakness and impotency, but to rise like a lion, and exert oneself to be a man with an omnipotent faith in himself to reach the highest,—was his exhortation to his countrymen, who are slowly but surely awakening to his call and trying their best to be a *man*. To be a man—to act manly—is the agitation of the moment.

In his scheme of an awakened India he did not aim at bringing about a mere revival or restoration of the Indian past. That might be a selfish dream dear to those who took only an academic interest in her, "like the Egyptologist's interest in Egypt." They little knew that such a life would be short-lived, "like a fire of palm leaves," in an age so different as the present. The Swami wanted to see India free from the elements of decadence and reaction, spiritually strong and vital as of old, but with an intense *Rajas* or energy coursing through her every vein like the electric flow of a tremendous power, expressing itself in an ever-expansive vision infinitely projected forward, and finding new application and undreamt-of expression in the new age. Special questions concerning beliefs, customs and usages should have to be solved not from the standard of mere conservatism or reform, but from that of the recapture of the ideal and its identification with India. Whatever was weak and corrupt would die out; who or what could stop that? Whatever was truth and strengthening would live immortal; who or what could destroy that? All that was required of modern India was not to change her social or religious institutions, but to put them in a position to work out the modern problems in the light of the national ideal. Once when asked by the Sister Nivedita what he felt to be the points of difference between his own schemes for the good of India and those practised by others, the Swami after expressing appreciation

of certain personal characteristics and lines of conduct adopted by some of the leaders of other schools, made the following noteworthy declaration as recorded by her :—

"I disagree with all those who are giving their superstitions back to my people. Like the Egyptologist's interest in Egypt it is easy to feel an interest in India that is purely selfish. One may desire to see again the India of one's books, one's studies, one's dreams. *My* hope is to see again the strong points of that India, reinforced by the strong points of this age, only in a natural way. The new state of things must be a growth from within.

"So I preach only the Upanishads. If you look, you will find that I have never quoted anything but the Upanishads. And of the Upanishads, it is only that one idea, *strength*. The quintessence of Vedas and Vedanta and all, lies in that one word. Buddha's teaching was of Non-resistance or Non-injury. But I think this is a better way of teaching the same thing. For behind that Non-injury lay a dreadful weakness. It is weakness that conceives the idea of resistance. I do not think of punishing or escaping from a drop of sea-spray. It is nothing to me. Yet to the mosquito it would be serious. Now I would make all injury like that. Strength and fearlessness! My own ideal is that giant of a saint whom they killed in the Mutiny, and who broke his silence, when stabbed to the heart, to say—'And Thou also art He!'

"But you may ask—what is the place of Ramakrishna in this scheme.

"He is the method, that wonderful unconscious method! He did not understand himself. He knew nothing of England or the English, save that they were queer folk from over the sea. But he lived that great life,—and I read the meaning. Never a word of condemnation for any !.....

"Hitherto the great fault of our Indian religion has lain in its knowing only two words—renunciation and *Mukti*. Only *Mukti* here! Nothing for the householder!

"But these are the very people whom I want to help. For, are not all souls of the same quality? Is not the goal of all the same?

"And so, strength must come to the nation through education."

In India his aim was, "to make Hinduism aggressive." The Eternal Religion must be bold and strong, conscious of itself as an organised unity, and become active, dynamic and proselytising. It must be capable of sending out special missions, of assimilating new elements, of making converts, and of taking back into its fold those of its own who had been perverted from its faith. He felt that the consciousness

of its strength and power to fulfil its mission will come when it seeks and reasserts its common bases and makes its stand upon the essentials of the national life. "If Hinduism is to be a force in the life of its peoples, it must seek "to effect an exchange of the highest ideals of the East and the West, and to realise these in practice ;" and it must prove itself, by the force of character, capable of dictating its own culture upon, and welcome and embrace, the whole modern development. The mission of the Swami Vivekananda was to rouse the historic consciousness of India, so that she may feel strong again to deliver her divine spiritual message to the needy West, pouring forth into her the mighty currents of her thought. The mission of spreading Eastern ideas and culture to the West he considered a part of his scheme of national regeneration.

In the contact between the East and the West, it should not be that either would lose its own individuality. That would be exploitation of the one by the other and not exchange of ideals. Before the advent of Vivekananda there was the danger of the East being exploited by the West in the realm of ideals,—the danger of Hinduism losing its balance under the pressure of Western culture and civilisation. That tide of Western invasion on Hindu culture was stemmed by the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, who were living examples of the possibilities and powers and of the greatness and realisations of the Hindu consciousness. Vivekananda taught the Hindus that there was no need for them to apologise to the West, as they were in the habit of doing, for having entertained the highest religious outlook on life that man could conceive.

India, the Swami emphasised, had much to teach and much to learn. It might sit at the feet of the West and learn practical sciences, but India was no beggar. She had priceless spiritual treasures to give to the West in exchange for the secular knowledge. Though she might learn from the West, any servile or ape-like imitation in learning, in religion or in manners was deadly demoralising. And it was always

to be remembered that, "Not by the help of others, but by the energy of Indians themselves should India rise!"

Europe and America, he said, were thirsting for spiritual ideas from India. Therefore let Indians, saturating themselves with the ideas of the Vedanta travel all over the world preaching and teaching its gospel. National life and expansion depended entirely on "the conquest of the whole world by Indian thought and spirituality." Already in the high places of European intellectual life traces of Indian influence were recognisable. Aye, India should be recognised; not alone that, for his prophetic vision saw India take its place as the highest spiritual authority before the nations of the world. He said, "The fiat of the Lord has gone forth. India must rise.....The flood of spirituality has already arisen. I see it rolling over the land resistless, boundless, all-absorbing....." Says the Sister Nivedita :—

"Again the trumpet blast of truth has been sounded in our midst. Once more is our country awakening to that renewed apprehension of her religious wealth which has been the forerunner of every impulse known to our history. In Vivekananda we have a reformulation of the Vedas and Upanishads, suited not only by its quality to meet the needs even of modern incredulity, but also universal enough in its appeal to be capable of opening the treasures of our literature to foreign peoples. The time may seem slow in coming, but it will assuredly arrive, when the influx of Oriental thought upon the modern consciousness will seem to historians and critics the great event of these passing centuries."

What would be the political significance of this exchange of the highest ideals of the East and the West? In one word, as the Swami put it, "We shall conquer our conquerers!" The tremendous power which the West exerts over the world lies in its material development of the forces of nature through the application of science, in its power of organisation and co-operation, in its dexterity in action, and in its intense energy. The East, on the other hand, bent on the realisation of the transcendental verities of life, never developed the above traits to an appreciable extent and can never combat the West on its own grounds, as the latter cannot approach the East in the spiritual sphere.

The salvation of the West depends as much upon the acceptance of the highest rationalistic principles of the Vedanta, as that of the East upon the learning and the practical application of sciences from the West. "Science coupled with Vedanta" was the ideal. Thus India would ever be the acknowledged *guru* to the West in religion and the latter would be the teacher to India in material science, and mutual respect, faith and sympathy for one another would prevail. It is through these bonds of equality alone that India would rise spontaneously, her political demands would receive respectful attention and compliance of the ruling powers, and not by mendicant policy and frothy agitation through lecturing and writing in the newspapers.

It is through the work of the Swami Vivekananda that India sees for the first time in her midst people from the distant West as converts to the Vedanta. And from Ceylon to the Himalayas, India hears a voice thundering the greatness of Bharatavarsha, the grandeur of Hindu ideals, the glory of the Indian past and the superiority of her civilisation over the whole world. Through the preaching of Vivekananda new conceptions are being introduced into India,—conceptions of Service, of nation making, of constructive reform, and of revival of Hinduism. Through the insight of Vivekananda, India is, as it were, growing self-conscious. A new spirit is moving over the land. A great spirit is at work, a spirit of which Sri Ramakrishna said, "It shall move the world."

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## CXLV.

### THE NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF HIS LIFE AND WORK.—II.

In this chapter it is intended to put on record two excellent articles bearing on the national significance of the life and work of the Swami Vivekananda written by two of his disciples, as these bring out in bold relief some of the psychological phases of his character and mission described in the last chapter. The one quoted in extracts below appeared in *The Brahmavadin*, under the heading :—

#### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, THE MEANING OF HIS SANNYASA.

"Greatness is interpretation—Great movements are an integration of national life. What then is the function of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement? What is its place in the history of the Hindu nation? Is there anything out of joint in the nation, any unfulfilled national task which it came to fulfil? What note does it contribute to the universal symphony? An answer to these questions will enable us to understand the full meaning and message of the Swami Vivekananda's life. In relation to that message his whole life stands explained and radiant.

"Two currents of thought, two powerful currents, have flowed down and divided the world's civilisation into the Eastern and Western. Whenever these two currents met, mighty characters have risen, changing the course of life and filling the earth with the power of the Spirit. With the establishment of the British Government and the introduction of Western Ideas, there has grown up in the Indian people the impulse to re-assert its own individuality, while the Occidental thought began to force itself more and more on the Oriental mind. The crystallised civilisation of India received a severe shock and the English-educated classes began to drift in a sea of doubt and restlessness, cut away from their ancient moorings. National continuity was blurred; race-culture and national heritage ceased to inspire the people; and the Western science stood lifeless and unassimilated. No nation has the right to live which has not a message to deliver to humanity. Once more India began to throb with life, to seek her innate unity and

strength, to define the vague aspirations of her soul. There was a yearning of the Spirit without the power of positive achievement; an indefinite sense of innate strength without the means of giving it a concrete expression. All the movements of this transition period are the confused expressions of an awakened sense of latent capacities. Some worshipped the relics of bygone ages and attempted to reconstruct Indian life on the basis of ritualism. Others made an intellectual analysis of facts without the spiritual power of synthetical expression. Amidst all these uncertain and exclusive efforts of a reawakened consciousness, the glory of the Atman, the solidarity of the universe and the oneness of India came out as the ruling ideas. This unknown power was driving the Indian intellect reconsecrating it to Mukti by declaring that the universe is thine own. Utterly insufficient to appease the demands of a growing generation, science, art, religion, and every department of human development awaited the coming of one who should link and unite them all in a single national idea and concentrate them all in one sole idea of spiritualising humanity. To assert what is India's soul and to collect the whole national being and swing it in a single act of self-realisation and universal redemption was the purpose of the Swami Vivekananda's life. This is the function of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Mission also.

"Sri Ramakrishna summed up the whole religious life of India. His message is the message of Ancient India to the modern nations of the world. But the mission of the Swami Vivekananda is the practical. This young visionary from his very boyhood felt that Indian men and women must grow in moral worth and strength, that 'only in a great, free and united India would Indians find light and life for the service of humanity,'—an India free from corrupting facts, from a crushing materialism, and passion for the finite, and united by a roused historic consciousness, united in the presence of an age-long spiritual culture,—and that only in such an India would the message of his Master be a living force to make her stand before the world as the spiritual teacher of humanity. This young idealist felt that the day must come when India self-conscious, radiant and purified by suffering would move among the nations of the world as an angel of light, love and peace. India has always been the preacher of the universal religion to humanity. Her deathless soul quickened the decaying pulse of Europe many a time before. In the prosperity of Persia and Egypt she laid the foundations of the Grecian and Roman civilisations; through political Greece, she gave Europe Christianity; and through the world-conquering Arab she was the mother of the Renaissance, of the Reformation and of the scientific and humanistic movements that followed it. If she is destined to do so again she must develop a power strong in unity, she must become



self-conscious and realise herself. This is the greater message of the Swami Vivekananda. If Ramakrishna is the Indian solution of the many complex problems of life, Swami Vivekananda is the energy of that solution, that ideal.

"Sri Ramakrishna came to establish Dharma in the world. But Dharma has no meaning outside of society. The spiritual and the social must become identical. The spiritual must comprehend the whole man,—his head, heart and will, his art and industries. Even our microscopic tasks must be brought into the Temple of contemplation, into the presence of God and phied there. Our little share in life must be interfused with the power of the Spirit : This is the secret of India's spiritual power; and it must be made living in the world. As Buddha tried to Aryanise Asia, so Swami Vivekananda tried to Indianise the world. This great task demanded the energy of a whole nation. He therefore exerted himself to rouse the nation to the full height of its manhood to fulfil this divine purpose of India's existence. All castes and creeds, the Brāhman and the Pariah, were called upon to contribute their best in spiritualising the world. As Krishna preached the Gospel of Strength to Arjuna, so the Swami preached it to India and to the world, to create an India greater than ever and dedicate her to the service of humanity.

"Therefore the national significance of the Swami Vivekananda's yellow garb is very great. In one luminous moment his soul caught the national cadence and began to vibrate in unison with the mother-heart. The melting rhythm of the song of Rishis filled his soul. An unknown voice cried out, 'My son ! My son ! Fulfil the purpose of thy life; thy great renunciation'. The vision of a future India filled his being. 'Lead on, Thou Friendly Light, lead on and show me the way out,' he cried out. A great love for the country, for the down-trodden and the suffering, burnt into him.

"\* \* \* The Swami said in his later days that sometimes he used to get such tremendous powers that he felt as if by a single touch he could send the whole world into Samadhi, as if by a single word he could carry whole audiences across the ocean of *Maya*. At these moments of spiritual exaltation he would either cut himself away from the world or spend his energy by wrestling with those who had the purity and strength to bear the power of his contact ...

"Suddenly the Swami had a call and a new spirit possessed him. His work as the Guru and saviour of Humanity began.....In such a man the national destiny fulfilled itself and a new wave of consciousness passed over the world. New hope and faith were born.

"If the Vedanta is to become dynamic, if the message of Ramakrishna is to be a living force in society, India must grow strong and united.

## THE LIFE OF THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

The purpose of her life must be brought out to rejuvenate the world. Is there [then] such a purpose? Is there a centre to which the collective inspiration of the race may ascend? Is there a core to manifest which all the diverse castes and creeds can function? For about six years this young Sannyasin wandered about the land in search of this unifying principle, which would enthuse his people, animate them to a fresh dynamic outburst, and would give them the energy to create a new constructive epoch.

"The life of this born Sannyasin is a life of continuous initiation. With his tremendous insight and powers, 'throwing himself into the object', effacing his self in the presence of the thing to be understood and assimilated, he passed these years of wanderings full of divine afflatus leading him nearer and nearer to the horizon of his dreams. He realised more and more his Master in himself. Fresh intuitions flowed into him. Everywhere he learnt something broadening the horizon of the synthesis that was to be.....Amidst the existing diversities he caught the essence, all that is fundamental and vital, harmonised his experiences and realised them as the varied moods of a single personality.....He declared that Hinduism has an individuality.....Its goal is Mukti and its means is Renunciation.....

"Behind castes and creeds, behind the Hindu and Mohammedan, behind all alike, there is the same Indian spiritual heritage, the same love of renunciation, the same beautiful ancestral civilisation, the same mother-land and an imperative necessity teaching common love. When the central purpose of national life is realised varieties of forms serve to reveal the richness of the Hindu ideal to enlist the manifold interests of social life and to combine freedom in worship and a common goal. In the harmony which will result from India's free adhesion and voluntary submission to the common ideal, which was his Master's message, he hoped to see the rise of a new moral world. In that purpose varieties must give an unknown power and beauty. India has a nationality, a central spiritual purpose; she must be roused to self-consciousness and assert what is her own. It is for this purpose the Swami incarnated, this soul of the nation; it is this purpose that led him to Ramakrishna and urged him on to a burning *tyaga*. It is this same purpose that led him also to foreign lands.

"Hinduism is a religion without a definition in time and place. But whenever the times demanded of her to yield her life secret, to create a new moral order for humanity, she became defined; and the whole community, strong, happy, bound in a solemn concord, then stood on earth as in a temple built to virtue and liberty, harmony and peace. One such definition was the Swami Vivekananda. When at the Parliament of Religions this great Parivrajaka declared that all forms from the lowest

fetichism to the highest Absolutism have a place in Hinduism, .....that very day the seeds of the higher nationalism were sown broadcast, that moment Hinduism was defined once again. The Swami unconsciously sang the very theme of his life and struck the harp of nationalism with a hero's strength and grace, with soul-thrilling harmony, in that grand symphony of his lecture on Hinduism. His was the soul of the most universal synthesis. In him, the Vedanta became dynamic, the accumulated culture of centuries became aggressive; Indian renunciation marked out new areas of life for conquest. This is the meaning of his Sannyas. His was a Sannyas of broader synthesis and larger service;—not a Sannyas of cold renunciation or of the luxury of a contemplative life, but a *Nyasa* or self-surrender for the well-being of humanity.\*\*\*

“By his burning *Tyaga*, this great awakener awakened the nation to the consciousness of its manhood; converted the latent energies of the nation into a potent power for the good of the world. Unlike the modern reformers, he roused the world and the nation only to the glory of the Atman, to the joy of Mukti.\*\*\*

“Swami Vivekananda was a child of the Vedic age. He always carried about him his native atmosphere, full of purity and power, full of the gladness of liberty. His vision was clear. His note was penetrating. Like the Aranyaka recluse he cried out to his countrymen :—

“‘Enter ye the citadel of the Soul. O Bharata arise, sleep no more, seek the fire bearing the burden on your shoulders, you who have drunk deep that prince of beverages, the immortality of the gods. With your minds controlled seek the God of the nation—the Virat.

“‘May Savitri give you beautiful hands, powerful minds and world-embracing heart. Then Hero! Awake, arise, expand, be steady and become great.’”

The following Character Sketch of the Master written by the Sister Nivedita appeared, shortly after the Swami's passing, in “The Hindu”, of Madras, bearing the title of—

### The National Significance of the Life and Work of the Swami Vivekananda.

“Of the bodily presence of him who was known to the world as Vivekananda, all that remains to-day is a bowl of ashes. The light that has burned in seclusion during the last five years by our river-side, has gone out now. The great voice that rang out across the nations is hushed in death. Life had come often to this mighty soul as storm and pain. But the end was peace. Silently, at the close of evensong, on dark night of Kali, came the benediction of death. The weary

tortured body was laid down gently, and the triumphant spirit was restored to the eternal Samadhi.

"He passed, when the laurels of his first achievements were yet green. He passed, when new and greater calls were ringing in his ears. Quietly, in the beautiful home of his illness, the intervening years with some few breaks, went by amongst plants and animals, unostentatiously training the disciples who gathered round him, silently ignoring the great fame that had shone upon his name. *Man-making* was his own stern brief summary of the work that was worth doing. And laboriously, unflaggingly, day after day, he set himself to man-making, playing the part of Guru, of father, even of school-master by turns. The very afternoon of the day he left us, had he not spent three hours in giving a lesson on the Sanskrit Grammar? External success and leadership were nothing to such a man. During his years in the West, he made rich and powerful friends, who would gladly have retained him in their midst. But, for him, the Occident, with all its luxuries had no charms. To him, the garb of a beggar, the lanes of Calcutta, and the disabilities of his own people, were more dear than all the glory of the foreigner, and detaining hands had to loose their hold of one who passed ever onward toward the East.

"What was it that the West heard in him, leading so many to hail and cherish his name as that of one of the greatest religious teachers of the world? He made no personal claim. He told no personal story. One whom he knew and trusted long had never heard that he held any position of distinction amongst his Gurubhais. He made no attempt to popularise with strangers any single form or creed, whether of God or Guru. Rather, through him the mighty torrent of Hinduism poured forth its cooling waters upon the intellectual and spiritual worlds, fresh from its secret sources in Himalayan snows. A witness to the vast religious culture of Indian homes and holy men he could never cease to be. Yet he quoted nothing but the Upanishads. He taught nothing but the Vedanta. And men trembled, for they heard the voice for the first time of the religious teacher who feared not truth.

"Do we not all know the song that tells of Shiva as He passes along the roadside, 'Some say He is mad. Some say He is the Devil. Some say—don't you know?—He is the Lord Himself.' Even so India is familiar with the thought that every great personality is the meeting-place and reconciliation of opposing ideals. To his disciples, Vivekananda will ever remain the arch-type of the Sannyasin. Burning renunciation was the chief of all the inspirations that spoke to us through him. 'Let me die a true Sannyasin as my Master did,' he exclaimed once, passionately, 'heedless of money, of women, and of fame! And of these the most insidious is the love of fame.' Yet the self-same destiny that filled him with this burning thirst of intense *vairagya* embodied in him

also the ideal householder, full of the yearning to protect and save, eager to learn and teach the use of materials, reaching out towards the reorganisation and reordering of life. In this respect, indeed, he belonged to the race of Benedict and Bernard, of Robert de Cîteaux and Loyola. It may be said that just as in Saint Francis of Assisi, the yellow robe of the Indian Sannyasin gleams for a moment in the history of the Catholic Church, so in Vivekananda the great saint-abbots of Western monasticism are born anew in the East.

"Similarly, he was at once a sublime expression of superconscious religion and one of the greatest patriots ever born. He lived at a moment of national disintegration and he was fearless of the new. He lived when men were abandoning their inheritance, and he was an ardent worshipper of the old. In him the national destiny fulfilled itself,—that a new wave of consciousness should be inaugurated always in the leaders of the Faith. In such a man it may be that we possess the whole Veda of the future. We must remember however that the moment has not come for gauging the religious significance of Vivekananda. Religion is living seed, and his sowing is but over. The time of his harvest is not yet. But death actually gives the Patriot to his country. When the Master has passed away from the midst of his disciples, when the murmurs of his critics are all hushed at the burning-ghat, then the great voice that spoke of Freedom rings out unchallenged and whole nations answer as one man.

"Here was a mind that had had unique opportunities of observing the people of many countries intimately. East and West he had seen and been received by the high and low alike. His brilliant intellect had never failed to gauge what it saw. 'America will solve the problems of the Sudra, but through what awful turmoil!' he said many times. On a second visit, however, he felt tempted to change his mind, seeing the greed of wealth and the lust of oppression in the West, and comparing these with the calm dignity and ethical stability of the old Asiatic solutions formulated by China many centuries ago. His great acumen was yoked to a marvellous humanity. Never had we dreamt of such a gospel of hope for the Negro as that with which he rounded on an American gentleman who spoke of the African races with contempt. And when, in the Southern States he was occasionally taken for a coloured man, and turned away from some door as such (a mistake that was always atoned for as soon as discovered, by the lavish hospitality of the most responsible families of the place), he was never known to deny the imputation. 'Would it not have been refusing my brother?' he said simply, when he was asked the reason of his silence. To him each race had its own greatness, and shone in the light of that central quality. There was no Europe without the Turk, no Egypt without the development of the

people of the soil. England had grasped the secret of obedience with self-respect. To speak of any patriotism in the same breath with Japan's was sacrilege.

"What then was the prophecy that Vivekananda left to his own people? With what national significance has he filled that *gerrua* mantle that he dropped behind him in his passing? Is it for us perhaps to lift the yellow rags upon our flagpole, and carry them forward as our banner? Assuredly. For here was a man who never dreamt of failure. Here was a man who spoke of naught but strength. Supremely free, from sentimentality, supremely defiant of all authority—are not missionary slanders still ringing in our ears? Are not some of them to be accepted with fresh accessions of pride?—he refused to meet any foreigner save as the Master. 'The Swami's great genius lies in his dignity,' said an Englishman who knew him well, 'it is nothing short of royal.' He had grasped the great fact that the East must come to the West, not as a sycophant, not as a servant, but as Guru and teacher, and never did he lower the flag of his personal ascendancy. 'Let Europeans lead us in Religion!' he would say, with a scorn too deep to be anything but merry. 'I have never spoken of revenge,' he said once. 'I have always spoken of strength. Do we dream of revenging ourselves on this drop of sea-spray? But it is a great thing to a mosquito!'

"To him, nothing Indian required apology. Did anything seem, to the pseudo-refinement of the alien, barbarous or crude? Without denying, without minimising anything, his colossal energy was immediately concentrated on the vindication of that particular point, and the unfortunate critic was tossed backwards and forwards on the horns of his own argument. One such instance occurred when an Englishman on boardship asked him some sneering question about the Puranas, and never can any, who were present, forget how he was pulverised by a reply that made the Hindu Puranas not only compare favourably with the Christian Gospels, but planted the Vedas and the Upanishads high up, beyond the reach of any rival. There was no friend that he would not sacrifice without mercy at such a moment in the name of national defence. Such an attitude was not, perhaps, always reasonable. It was often indeed frankly unpleasant. But it was superb in the manliness that even enemies must admire. To Vivekananda, again, everything Indian was absolutely and equally sacred,—Of this land to which must come all souls wending their way Godward!—as his religious consciousness tenderly phrased it. At Chicago, any Indian man attending the Great World Bazar, rich or poor, high or low, Hindu, Mahomedan, Parsi, what not, might at any moment be brought by him to his hosts for hospitality and entertainment, and they well knew that any failure of kindness on

their part to the least of these would immediately have cost them his presence.

"He was himself the exponent of Hinduism, but finding another Indian religionist struggling with the difficulty of presenting his case, he sat down and wrote his speech for him, making a better story for his friend's faith than its own adherent could have done !

"He took infinite pains to teach European disciples to eat with their fingers and perform the ordinary simple acts of Hindu life. 'Remember ! If you love India at all, you must love her *as she is*, not as you might wish her to become !' he used to say. And it was this great firmness of his, standing like a rock for what actually was, that did more than any other single fact, perhaps, to open the eyes of those aliens who loved him to the beauty and strength of that ancient poem,—the common life of the common Indian people. For his own part, he was too free from the desire of approbation to make a single concession to new-fangled ways. The best of every land had been offered him, but it left him still the simple Hindu of the old style, too proud of his simplicity to find any need of change. 'After Rāmakrishna, I follow Vidyasagar,' he exclaimed, only two days before his death, and out came the oft-repeated story of the wooden sandals coming pitter-patter with the *chudder* and *dhoti*, into the Viceregal Council Chamber, and the surprised 'But if you didn't want me, why did you ask me to come ?' of the old Pundit, when they remonstrated.

"Such points, however, are only interesting as personal characteristics. Of a deeper importance is the question as to the conviction that spoke through them. What was this ? Whither did it tend ? His whole life was a search for the common basis of Hinduism. To his sound judgment the idea that two-pice postage, cheap travel, and a common language of affairs could create a national unity, was obviously childish and superficial. These things could only be made to serve India's turn if she already possessed a deep organic unity of which they might conveniently become an expression. Was such a unity existent or not ? For something like eight years he wandered about the land changing his name at every village, learning of every one he met, gaining a vision as accurate and minute as it was profound and general. It was this great quest that overshadowed him with its certainty when, at the Parliament of Religions, he stood before the West and proved that Hinduism converged upon a single imperative of perfect freedom so completely as to be fully capable of intellectual aggression as any other faith. It never occurred to him that his own people were in any respect less than the equals of any other nation whatsoever. Being well aware that Religion was their national expression, he was also aware that the strength which they might display in that sphere would be followed before long, by every other conceivable form of strength.

"As a profound student of caste,—his conversation teemed with its unexpected particulars and paradoxes!—he found the key to Indian unity in its exclusiveness. Mahomedans were but a single caste of the nation, Christians another, Parsis another, and so on. It was true that of all these (with the partial exception of the last), non-belief in caste was a caste distinction. But then, the same was true of the Brahma Samaj, and other modern sects of Hinduism. Behind all alike stood the great common facts of one soil, one beautiful old routine of ancestral civilisation, and the overwhelming necessities that must inevitably lead at last to common love and common hates.

"But he had learnt, not only the hopes and ideals of every sect and group of the Indian people, but their memories also. A child of the Hindu quarter of Calcutta, returned to live by the Ganges-side, one would have supposed from his enthusiasm that he had been born, now in the Punjab, again in the Himalayas, at a third moment in Rajputana, or elsewhere. The songs of Guru Nanak alternated with those of Meera Bai and Tan Sen on his lips. Stories of Prithi Rai and Delhi jostled against those of Cheetore and Protap Singh, Shiva and Uma, Radha and Krishna, Sita-Rama and Buddha. Each mighty drama lived in a marvellous actuality, when he was the player. His whole heart and soul was a burning epic of the country, touched to an overflow of mystic passion by her very name.

"Seated in his retreat at Belur, Vivekananda received visits and communications from all quarters. The vast surface might be silent, but deep in the heart of India, the Swami was never forgotten. None could afford, still fewer wished, to ignore him. No hope but was spoken into his ear,—no woe but he knew it, and strove to comfort or to rouse. Thus, as always in the case of a religious leader, the India that he saw, presented a spectacle strangely unlike that visible to any other eye. For he held in his hands the thread of all that was fundamental, organic, vital; he knew the secret springs of life; he understood with what word to touch the heart of millions. And he had gathered from all this knowledge a clear and certain hope.

"Let others blunder as they might. To him, the country was young, the Indian vernaculars still unformed, flexible, the national energy unexploited. The India of his dreams was in the future. The new phase of consciousness initiated to-day through pain and suffering was to be but the first step in a long evolution. To him, his country's hope was in herself. Never in the alien. True, his great heart embraced the alien's need, sounding a universal promise to the world. But he never sought for help, or begged assistance. He never leaned on any. What might be done, it was the doer's privilege to do, not the recipient's to accept. He had neither fears nor hopes from without. To re-assert that



which was India's essential self, and leave the great stream of the national life, strong in a fresh self-confidence and vigour, to find its own way to the ocean, this was the meaning of his Sannyas. For his was pre-eminently the Sannyas of the greater service. To him, India was Hinduistic, Aryan, Asiatic. Her youth might make their own experiments in modern luxury. Had they not the right? Would they not return? But the great deeps of her being were moral, austere, and spiritual. A people who could embrace death by the Ganges-side were not long to be distracted by the glamour of mere mechanical power.

"Buddha had preached renunciation, and in two centuries India had become an Empire. Let her but once more feel the great pulse through all her veins, and no power on earth would stand before her newly-awakened energy. Only, it would be in her *own* life that she would find life, not in imitation; from her own proper past and environment that she would draw inspiration, not from the foreigner.

"For he who thinks himself weak *is* weak; he who believes that he is strong is already invincible. And so, for his nation, as for every individual, Vivekananda had but one word—one constantly reiterated message :—

"'Awake! Arise! Struggle on! And stop not till the Goal is reached!'"



## CXLVI.

### SOME OTHER ASPECTS OF HIS GENIUS.

What a wonderful personality was that of the Swami Vivekananda ! What an all-round character of the highest type was his ! As the many torrents of rivers flowing from various sources mingle their waters in the ocean, so in him were fused into a perfected whole all the life-giving thoughts and ideas ever conceived by man. In him were harmonised and unified in a charming manner the truths of all the opposing doctrines such as, the fierce transcendentalism of the Advaita and the love and devotion to a Personal God, the Gospel of meditation and service to humanity, the love of the Universal and the love of the Particular, God and the world, unity in variety, Religion and Science—and all these were made the moods of a single being ! Hence it was that he could play with any mood with perfect abandonment, retaining at the same time an awakened self-consciousness. Truly has it been said, "Vivekananda was a soul of immortal germs which may be said to contain within itself what endless ages are to unfold." The purity and the sublimity of his character, the brilliancy of his intellect, the subtle workings of his soul, the greatness of his heart which recognised a brother in every individual, and the universality of his teachings which embraced all religions—all these made up a unique personality and contributed to make an indelible impression on the minds of his brethren of the West, as it did on those of his countrymen, and transformed the world by his tender but mighty touch.

His brilliant intellectuality and his vast learning and erudition, which showed forth in his eloquence, and above all, his personal magnetism acted like a charm upon people wherever he went. There was a certain irresistible force about his personality which carried everything before it,

He was a great debator and argumentator. He was never known to have been vanquished in argumentation by anyone, save by his Master on a few occasions. As a strong man holding strong views on subjects and expressing himself in strong language, he could not help making enemies, but even they could not withstand him face to face. He was conscious of his power over men and once in a heated moment of discussion, he told some of his *gurubhais*, "Do you know, I can make you see black as white and white as black, make you taste a bitter thing as sweet, and sweet as bitter!" He was conscious of an Invincible Power working in and through him. As regards the rival sects and his combatants he felt the sense of the words of Sri Krishna to Arjuna in the Gita—"Verily by Myself have they (thy enemies) been already slain; be thou merely an apparent cause, O Savyasachin (Arjuna)." He had the purified intellect and moreover he knew that he was an instrument in the hands of the Lord. Said the late Hon'ble Mr. Anandaçharlu in a lecture at Bangalore:—

"The Swami's face had a fascination for everybody. There was about him some magnetism which moved the dullest stupid. An American critic has said, 'He had oratory by divine right.' Nay, there was more behind it all, there was a fervour of divine fire. That accounts for his having conquered all obstacles before him.....All that was due to the divine power that burnt in him. Every word that he uttered was powerful, and his face looked divinely beautiful when he spoke. This son of India, like another Asiatic son of God of Christendom, arose in the East but did not set in the West as the latter did. He stood there on his native soil to spread light and illumine everybody and prevent darkness..... He was one of the greatest leaders sent by God Almighty to dispel darkness and illumine Indian wisdom....."

The Swami's studies were vast and all-comprehensive. But the beauty of his studies was, that they were often not in the attitude of a learner, but in the spirit of a thoughtful and open-minded critic, agreeing or disagreeing with the authors,—be they Rishis, Acharyas or savants,—according as they proved or disproved his lines of thought and researches, or his realisations. History was one of his favourite subjects for study, and he would philosophise upon the

significance and far-reaching outcomes of the epoch-making incidents, and upon the subtle causes that led to the rise and fall of nations and civilisations, invariably imprinting his own originality of thought upon them. "His mighty genius," says a writer, "revealed in studying the brilliant epochs in the history of the world. He would advise young Indians to read the story of nations, specially those periods in which great events, titanic struggles and mighty revolutions, mental and moral, changed the face of society and brought out the divine spark within whole peoples." The East stirred in him the very depths of his soul, for it was to him not only the mother of religions, but of civilisation as well, of which there is to be found elsewhere only a shadow.

The Swami was a man of wonderful versatility. He could speak on any subject with authority, invariably throwing new light on it,—be it religion, philosophy, history, science, art, literature, philology, sociology, and what not! He could clothe any dry subject with such a beauty and grace that it became a most interesting study and roused the keenest desire for further knowledge. One wondered as to how he could have garnered all this diverse knowledge, how he could have exercised his thinking and analytic mind in such a masterly way over them, especially those which were outside his sphere of study as a San n yasin, and how without a moment's hesitation he could give them out, enriched with his own original comments and conclusions! No wonder that a famous Harvard University professor had spoken of him, 'Compared to his learning all our University professors are as mere children. He is more learned than all of us put together!'

The Swami was a born orator. His power of oratory showed itself even in his youth in the circle of his friends, when in the course of a talk he would be so overcome with feeling and ideas that he would rise to the highest flights of eloquence, keeping the group around him spell-bound. Though with perhaps one exception at Hyderabad he had never before spoken from a public platform, the address he

delivered at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago was described by the Press of America as "the most brilliant speech of the Parliament," and even the most bigoted had to admit that, "This man with his handsome face and magnetic presence and wonderful oratory is the most prominent figure in the Parliament." That one speech made him famous all over the world. The subsequent lectures that he gave in America were some of the masterpieces of the world's religious literature. Not only Chicago, but every city that he visited, was galvanised by his thrilling speeches, and the great apostle of Hinduism commanded vast audiences. *The New York Critic* remarked, "He is an orator by divine right." After he had passed through Detroit a local paper wrote, "This great Hindu cyclone has shaken the world." "Those who had heard him once," wrote Dr. H. W. Thomas of Chicago, "were so impressed by the magnetism of his fine presence, the charm and power of his eloquence, his perfect command of the English language, and the deep interest in what he had to say, that they desired all the more to hear him again."

It is superfluous to quote authorities to prove that he was an orator of the highest type. His passionate representation of whatever he spoke upon, his vigour of language and felicity of utterance, his gift of expression, his powerful and melodious voice, and above all, the never-failing charm of his personality, fascinated all who were privileged to hear him. He was gifted with "a voice that had a richness and musical quality rarely found among men." His speeches were all extempore. He never prepared them, and he invariably spoke without notes. The stream of his eloquence flowed from his heart and the spontaneity of his utterances lent an added force and appealed direct to the heart.

When he spoke he looked like one inspired. The Swami himself has said that whenever he stood on a public platform, a power came upon him which made him feel that, with one word he could carry the whole of his audience across the ocean of Maya. And instances there were when, at the climax of his power as a religious preacher it seemed,

as though all details and personalities were lost and merged in the spiritual radiance which emanated so powerfully from him, and only the Spirit remained, pervading all, uniting speaker, hearer and spoken word.

The Swami was a man of charming wit and humour, and his lectures as well as talks would be interspersed with bon-mots and light-hearted remarks even in the midst of serious philosophical dissertations. His ready wit and presence of mind saved him from many an awkward situation and relieved the intellectual tension of his audience with whom he sometimes joined in a hearty laugh. His wit though incisive at times was for the most part playful and generally pointed to a moral or to the exposition of a plague-spot in society, but was never sardonic. "Although his knife cuts deep sometimes," said *The New York Critic*, "it is like that of the surgeon, in that it cuts only to be kind."

As a writer, the Swami Vivekananda was master of a clear, simple, and forcible style. His erudition in ancient and modern literature was never equalled by the best Western savants. His writings display the breadth and catholicity of his views, poetic imagination, an intense patriotism, a well-balanced judgment and sympathetic attitude with regard to the beliefs and customs of peoples, remarkable observations on the gradual evolution of society, civilisation and religion and their inter-relative scopes and purposes, and include a wide range of general knowledge, which make their reading a delightful and illuminative study.


"There is in the writings of the Swami," says a writer, "a spirit of catholicism and charity which is in refreshing contrast to the rigid formalism and illiberal literalism of the Pandit expounders of the Hindu scriptures." "His was a poet's soul," says another, "to which the world had messages unknown to ordinary man, and which revealed them in words of imperishable loveliness. He wrote very few poems. But his great poetic gift finds its best expression in the wonderfully imaginative passages which illumine his speeches and writings."

His language though easy and simple was vigorous, though artistic and imaginative was profoundly thoughtful, though concise and epigrammatical was clear and suggestive,

though sharp and pliable like the edge of a fine steel which cuts through stone, touched the heart with the delicacy of a flower. His language was never laboured and twisted, which is mistakenly done to create an effect or to show off one's learning. It was the faithful mirror of his thoughts and feelings, and hence it was so telling and vibrant with life.

As a thinker, perhaps, the Swami will continue to exercise the most abiding influence on, and be a constant source of inspiration to, the minds of those sincere seekers of Truth who had not the good fortune of coming into direct contact with him, and also of future generations. Such will find in "The Complete Works of the Swami Vivekananda" a New Gospel, a Message of Hope and Salvation, a living commentary of the Vedic religion in its universal and particular aspects. They are a storehouse of the richest and priceless gems. Therein are embodied his great realisations, his insight and introspection, his bold speculations and analyses, his masterly grasp of the conclusions of thought in other countries, his cogent reasoning and striking deductions, his reconciliation and harmonising of warring religious sects and doctrines, his solutions of the intricate problems of life, and above all, his ideals and the practical methods of their attainment. His lectures and discourses deserve to be ranked among the noblest productions of spiritual eloquence. They surpass anything yet known in their simplicity and vigour of thought for the illustration of spiritual truths. The master-mind who conceived all these, is entitled to be regarded as the greatest thinker of his age. And how much greater was the man himself than all his works! In studying them one feels, as says the Sister Nivedita, that "Behind all his books, all his utterances, stands the man himself, different from each, and only partially expressed through the whole mass."

It was the unique combination of all these various aspects of his genius that gave such currency to his teachings and made him the powerful teacher and leader of nations in religion.



## A COMPLEX CHARACTER.

The Swami Vivekananda's was a life of striking contrasts and moods of infinite variety, which confounded even his friends at times, as has been stated before. He was at once the greatest Karma Yogin and Raja Yogin; and in him both a Jnani and a Bhakta were combined. His intellectual sympathies were generous and broad, and yet so intense that he could represent almost fanatically any given idea to the exclusion of all others. As an instance, on his last visit to New York, in a lecture he glorified the ideals in marriage in such an exalted way as to induce a certain monastically-minded admirer among his audience to ask him later on privately, "But, Swamiji, you do not really exalt marriage above monasticism, do you?" His reply was at once luminous and brief, "Do you not know I *am* a monk!" Though a poet and philosopher, he could set himself joyfully to such tasks as sweeping the monastery at Belur and hoeing the fields. Though one of the keenest students of the manners, customs and faiths of his own people, the Swami often said, "In India I have looked for nothing save the cave in which to meditate." Though perfectly unattached to the world, he wore his life out working for the good of the world. Though an unparalleled Advaitin, so eloquently did he lecture in America on Sri Krishna that, as one among many other effects, a lady of vast wealth retired, with the Bhagavad-Gita, to a distant island, there to meditate. This incident also gives a rebuke to such of the Swami's critics, who mentioned that in the West, he did not preach popular Hinduism. A man of innumerable spiritual experiences, he was nevertheless a most careful analyser of mystic states. Most others regard mystical experiences objectively, but the Swami dared even classify his own as subjective. This,



to his mind, strengthened, and never weakened, their accuracy. Though an ardent Hindu, so beautiful and deeply religious was his attitude to Jesus that, when Christian missionaries once visited the Baranagore Math they said, "These people are already Christians!" Indeed, as they saw the Swami had a picture of the crucified Christ in a prominent place in the building, with sandal-wood paste at the feet, as the mark of worship. He was far from being political, and yet the Indian princes with whom he came into intimate touch during his sojourn with them in his Parivrajaka days sought his sound advice on statecraft, and the greatest Indian statesmen revered him and his name and were zealous students of his ideas.

A man of the supersensuous mould and teacher as he was, with huge interests the world over, the Swami was nevertheless interested in the minutest details of work concerning his centres. For example, when he heard that one of his *guruhais* had planned a corrugated iron roof over the stairs that lead to the Thakurghar in the monastery at Belur, he wrote a strong protest against such a desecration, both of religion and art. His manliness was perfect and a veritable shining forth of strength, and yet he was at heart as soft as a woman. Though as a thinker and a philosopher he was a stern rationalist, emotions and feelings touched the inmost chords of his heart. Though intellectuality was the predominant trait of his character, in his dealings with men he always let the heart guide him rather than the head, let instinct determine his decision rather than reason, and he seldom had occasion for regret. Though perfectly unattached to the world, so intensely did he feel for humanity that he spurned the bliss of Brahman and joyously worked his whole life out for its sake. Though he had the greatest love for his disciples he would send them out to nurse plague-stricken patients, knowing full well the risk of fatal contagion, as nothing would please him more, he said, than seeing his own people die in the service of their suffering fellow-beings. And again, exceedingly unselfish as he himself was, he

became most selfish when to be so was for the benefit of those whom he had taken into his charge.

Always busy with plans and works that would have crushed any other less gifted individual, the Swami never seemed overburdened with work. Even in the midst of his strenuous labours he took things as they came, kept up an unclouded serenity, and enjoyed the changing panorama of life as the witness. Even when engrossed in some serious occupation, as reading or writing, he would be found always accessible for conversation,—which would sometimes last for hours,—without breaking the thread of his thoughts. He disliked routine work, or making engagements, or having appointed hours for interviews and receiving visitors, and the like, though in the West he had to conform himself to them. True, he formulated a routine with strict rules and regulations for the guidance of his disciples as a disciplinary course, but he would himself break it and call them from their work to his side to hold a religious talk or a question-class, or it might be to give them a lesson in music and singing, or even simply for the sake of company. Though an upholder of organisation, he did not believe in making machines of men, and thereby killing out their individuality. He would let them occasionally feel the air of freedom, and demonstrate even their power of breaking or changing laws.

Notwithstanding that the Swami was against making a fetish of book-learning, he had an insatiable desire for knowledge and was a diligent reader of books of all descriptions. Once while the Swami was the wandering monk, the Swami Trigunatita who chanced to meet him, found him intently studying French Primers, which he kept with him during his travels at the time. Even in the days of his discipleship he had brought his college books to Dakshineswar and to Cossipore. Though he was most liberal-minded, even to the extent that some criticised him as unorthodox, he was at heart orthodox, in its true sense, and also encouraged his monastic disciples to be so. He had a sincere respect for orthodox Pandits and Sadhus if they were not

bigoted, and had many admirers from among them. Such an intellectually distinguished and supremely orthodox person as the late Swami Vishuddhananda of Benares, who would not as much as look at a Sudra, regarded him with great respect. And the well-known Swami Bhaskarananda of Benares expressed his earnest desire to see Swamiji, and requested two of his fellow-monks to write to him about it. But Swamiji's health at the time not permitting him to meet the great ascetic, he wrote a charming letter to him in Sanskrit, full of humility, expressing his inability. Though he was an artist, a great æsthete, and, in everything he did, a veritable Grand Seignior, he would sometimes shock his hosts and friends with his supreme indifference to social conventionalities. Though he did not countenance asceticism, so great was his ascetic spirit that once or twice he even had recourse to violence to demonstrate his mastery over the body, and crush out any exaggerated physical sensation. And in this respect, though he taught severe control of the senses by any and by every means, he emphasised especially resignation to the Lord.

What a complex man he was ! The Sister Nivedita has well expressed it when she said, "Burning renunciation was the chief of all the inspirations that spoke to the world through him. Yet the same burning thirst of intense renunciation did not exclude the ideal householder in him, full of the yearning to protect and save, eager to learn and teach the use of materials, reaching out towards the reorganisation and reordering of life." And how childlike and yet how courageous was his resignation to the Lord ! He once mentioned that in the West he had led a purely Prapatti life, that is, a life of utter dependence upon God. Success he knew must come to him, but in each instance, he said, it was necessary to first pass for a time through a valley of death. And yet this same man, whose spiritual self-consciousness soared into the Very Highest, would often manifest as equally surprising a humility, as when on one occasion he hastened to wash the mud-soiled feet of a guest in the presence of his disciples.

CHAPTER

It is impossible to give an adequate picture of his sublime character, so potent so complex, so all-comprehending, with infinite facets, each facet representing a variation of the light within. His was a harmonious development of all sides of nature, intellectual, emotional and spiritual, to perfection, which is seldom found in man, and which drew men to his feet in love and adoration.



## CXLVIII.

### IN THE GENERAL PERSPECTIVE.

When one considers the Swami's character in the general perspective, what strikes one most is his gift of vision, his power of perceiving the heart of things and making others perceive it, his genius in unravelling the harmony in the soul of things, and his ability to make others realise the scheme of the universe. And these are the qualities which, above all, entitle him to rank as one of the greatest prophets of the world.

Much has already been written about the Swami's meditative moods into which he would drift irrespective of time or place. And here is another instance which reveals this quality. During his tour on the Continent, going out for a walk once with an English disciple, he entered a secondhand bookseller's shop and enquired if a copy of *Sakuntalā* could be had. Having procured it he became so absorbed in reading it then and there, that the disciple could with difficulty and after repeated reminders of his engagements rouse him from his study. He then bought the book and presented it to her, and later wrote in it, "To My Mother in the Himalayas."

"I went into Samadhi at the age of seven," once said the Swami to his Brāhmana boy-friends. "You are Brahmanas and yet you cannot meditate for five minutes, while I can sit for hours together. You do not therefore deserve the holy thread you wear."

In the Swami was combined the meditative nature of a Hindu saint with the dash and energy of a Westerner. He was a militant yogi, a Brahmana and a Kshattriya, a monk and a warrior, in one. He was the personification of that which is the present need in India—the Kshattriya force—that force which distinguished the Kshattriyas of those days

when they were the revealers of divine wisdom, the producers of the Upanishads and the preachers of religion to all castes, as well as the upholders of their faith, honour and national integrity, patrons of science, arts and learning, and defenders of the weak. "Can you become," asks the Swami of his countrymen, "Can you become an occidental of occidentals in your spirit of equality, freedom, work and energy and at the same time be a Hindu to the very backbone in religious culture and instincts? This is to be done and *we will do it*. You are all *born to do it*." In him, indeed, met the two mighty streams of the Idealistic East and the Scientific and Practical West. He was a dreamer of Infinite Dreams, but a breaker of Dreams as well. From the deeps of his meditation comes thundering the voice :—

"Awake, arise, and dream no more !

\* \* \* \* Be bold, and face

The Truth ! Be one with it ! Let Visions cease,  
Or, if you cannot, dream but nearing dreams,  
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free."

Like all great masters of the past he absorbed all that was vital and enduring in his own times. His call was sounded in the name of all that was great and good, all that was manly, life-giving, and God-making. His was an appeal to all sects, all nations, in fact, to the whole world. He was the self-expression of all that was spiritual and idealistic, all that made for unity and illumination. Science, art, philosophy, religion, in short, all the revelations in the domain of thought and human experience, were like an open book to him. The voices of nature spoke out their secrets to him. His life was a continuous initiation into the mysteries of Being, his soul finding its recreation in them in all its varied moods. Verily, all the great ideals of humanity he made his own.

The rock on which the Swami built up the structure of his message was Truth, Love and Toleration, which are the three principal essentials of religion, three inseparable entities, one presupposing the other two. He was a teacher

of Synthesis, not only spiritual but national as well, viewing it from a universal standpoint. His interests were not only spiritual but material also, not only Indian but international as well. His was a soul of Synthesis. His mission was to show that unity in variety is the plan of the universe, that man becomes divine when he sees the One manifesting Itself in all these manifold forms. With the fire of a prophet in his eyes he proclaimed before the greatest of the religious assemblies of the modern world his message of the harmony of religions,—that there is one Religion of which all the different forms of religions are but different readings of the same Truth from different standpoints by human minds, that man travels from Truth to Truth, from lesser truth to higher and the highest Truth and never from error to truth. He believed not in universal toleration only, but also in the acceptance of all religions as true. If one religion is true, he said, then all other religions must be true in their own planes of realisation. Therefore, let there be “Harmony and peace and good-will, and no more bigotry, fanaticism, fights and dissensions !” And at the sound of his magic voice, the world awoke to a life of new Synthesis, and a new vision of life. It may be said that from the day he spoke from the platform of the Parliament of Religions, was inaugurated a new era in the history of religions. True, other voices before him had declared the same truth, but they had done it feebly, hesitatingly, with certain reservations, looking through the smoked glass of reason and intellectual analysis, and not through the eye of a seer who had come face to face with Truth. It was reserved for the Swami Vivekananda to deliver to the world with an apostolic authority that message of harmony of all religions, the realisation and the embodiment of which in its perfection he had seen in his divine Master’s life and had made them his very own. It has been well said that in him we have the synthesis of the higher Hinduism.

Like all great Masters of the past the Swami ushered in a new cycle of thought, a new ideal of life wherever he

worked, and inspirited the ideals and aspirations of the times with a new strength and vigour for the fulfilment of the highest aims and purposes of human existence.

All who came within the shadow of the Swami's personality borrowed from his greatness. He emanated a joyous robustness, a courage, love and purity, nothing short of contagious, for he was "a roaring fire of spirituality."

Napoleon had once said that he attributed his superiority over men to the fact that his brain possessed unusual power for performing arduous and long-continued work at any time his will should dictate. The same may be said of the Swami. He knew no limits in intellectual work. His head never tired. His mind, one might say, worked *ex tempore* and at the highest pitch on all occasions. It was this velocity and spontaneity of mental energy, embodied, with other spiritual elements, in his Parliamentary address, that had moved the Parliament of Religions' Committees to vote his speech as the very best of all those rendered before that most distinguished of all religious gatherings in the history of the world. His very personality bespoke this mental energy, commingled as it was with the highest spiritual insight. On merely seeing him, Professor Max Muller, already a sincere and great admirer of Sri Ramakrishna, had said, both in compliment to him and to his Guru, "It is not every day that one meets with a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna!"

What caused great admiration among those who were fit to judge, was that the Swami never indulged in theory-making. His was an eminent practicality of mind. Whenever he reasoned, he thought of the practical side as well, as was evidenced in his actual and intended labours and in his decisions—though because of his early demise not carried out,—of founding a religious university for Sannyasins in Madras, an industrial colony in the Central Provinces as a scientific experiment, and also a women's college in Calcutta and in Poona, where Indian women might be trained as future abbesses and teachers and, indeed, even as the *Bashi*



*Bazouks* of religion. The practicality of his mind was manifest also in the soundness of his logic and in his capacity for synthesis, evident, among various other ways, in his ideas concerning divergent social and religious problems, when he showed that in their respective spheres they were not antagonistic but complementary to each other. Then, also, his mind possessed a highly scientific turn, as is instanced in his lectures and in such of his sayings as, "The Avatara is indeed in the world of spiritual things the equivalent of the Hydrostatic Paradox in the world of physics!" And he was logically scientific when he made such statements as, "Buddha saw through a negative what Shankara saw through a positive perspective. Though intellectually powerful the Swami was never destructive. He had indeed stormed at and uprooted *Churchianity* wheresoever he found it, but in its stead he ever offered the constructive ideals of practicalising the higher spiritual consciousness.

His heart was as large as his intellect was high. His heart throbbed for human suffering wherever he met it. He could have returned from the West laden with money if he had not given away freely of what he received from his lectures and other sources, to anyone, whether American, or English or Indian, who had applied to him in distress. It was the greatest difficulty with him to keep money, and well nigh impossible when he found he could help some one with it. The needs and sufferings of every individual he felt in himself. His deepest thoughts were to find out practical ways and means for raising humanity. It was this profound love and sympathy for mankind in general, and an overmastering desire to make the whole world participate in the life of the Spirit and its Infinite Bliss that induced him to cross the ocean carrying his God-appointed message to millions far away, and to devote the best of his powers and energies till the very last day of his life to the work of the regeneration of mankind.

His grace was *ahetuki*, without reason. It could not bear making discrimination of *adhikāri*, or the deservedness of

the recipient. It made no distinction between the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the saint and the sinner. It uplifted all and inspired courage and hope in every heart. A beneficent force emanated from him filling everyone with joy. His love was spontaneous and flowed freely. It stopped at nothing, even the unreasonable. In his second voyage to the West, when he reached Madras he asked one of his Madras boys to accompany him as far as Colombo. The steamer was in quarantine and no one was allowed to land. An European friend of the Swami got the permission of the captain to take him into the city. But the Swami refused to go unless his Madras boy was also taken with him. "Do you wish to evade the plague regulations, Swamiji?" asked the English disciple. "Yes," was his calm reply. Later on, however, at the earnest entreaties of his old friends at Colombo, he went into the city and had a most enthusiastic reception.

He was grateful to a fault for the least kindness done to him or to his *gurubhais*, and would repay it a hundredfold when occasion arose. He was too lenient with such benefactors, especially those of the old days of poverty and unknownness, and would bear with them patiently if they took any undue liberty with him. And to his impatient *gurubhais* he would point out in persuasive words, how invaluable the little services of these friends had been to them at a time when they needed them most, and when they were "no-bodies" in the eyes of the world.

Conscious of the strength of the Truth he embodied he was fearless of criticism. He had a mighty contempt for the seeking of name, fame or wealth, or the favour and approbation of the public mind. He did not care to have an army of followers and admirers, or to please the world by telling sweet and pleasant things, like a religious hypocrite. He would speak out the truth, however unpalatable, whatever it might cost him. He would consider his life-work amply rewarded, he used to say, if he could find in all his life only half-a-dozen men and women to follow him,—real men, and

women. pure and sincere, bold and unselfish to the core of their heart, with indomitable faith in themselves, in their guru and in God,—for such have always been the world-movers and the makers of the history of the world.

Like his great Master, the Swami did not care for the rich and the learned and for persons of power and position, if they did not utilise their scope and opportunities for the good of society or the nation to the best advantage, or if they did not meet him in the spirit of an inquirer. Many were the occasions when his hosts and friends were put in an uncomfortable position for their having introduced him to such persons, expecting to have an interesting meeting or a profitable result. But beyond the exchange of formal courtesies they could not get one word out of him. Sometimes he would not want even to see them when they came on a visit to him, or he would ignore their presence and prefer to talk with the lowly and the humble. Then again, in another mood he would talk with the aristocrat or the millionaire, as with the lowly and the oppressed, with equal ease and freedom, and with a directness of appeal to that Divine-within-man, in which he had the perfect confidence. He never doubted the efficacy of his influence on others.

A hater of money though he was, he once prayed to Sri Ramakrishna for it, or rather demanded it with a threatening test. During his travels in Upper India, after his return from the West, when he had in mind many schemes for the benefit of his country, he found himself hampered in their fruition owing to the want of money. Foiled in his attempt he became impatient with himself and his divine Master, and prayed to him saying, "Lord ! If money be not forthcoming, I will give up the Path and abandon myself to a life of debauchery !" And money did really begin to flow from unexpected quarters ! But it is to be remembered that this was the only occasion, within the knowledge of his disciples, when he made such an extreme test, and that was solely from a burning desire for the furtherance of the welfare of his country. O, how passionately he loved his

Motherland! Did he not say, "If I do anything for others, may it react on India!"

Unlike most of his countrymen he was singularly devoid of jealousy, so much so that he would go even to the extent of helping a competitor in the same field and rejoice at his success. Such was the magnanimity of his heart that though he went to preach Hinduism before the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, he wrote at the request of another Oriental delegate his thesis, and "made out a better ease for his friend's creed than its own advocate could have done!" He would do anything to help a countryman in a foreign land, and stand by him, even if the man proved to be a rogue.

In America there were some who criticised the Swami for not paying more attention to his health. They said, "You are ill! You are a great Yogi. Why not cure yourself?" His reply was like that of his Master, "Why put all one's mind on this cage of bones!" The Swami had no fear either of death or disease. The only thing he feared was, that his work might suffer thereby. "The Work is always my weak point," he said a few days before his passing. "When I think *that* might come to an end, I am all undone!" Then, again, in a mood of deeper insight he would exclaim: "To work for the good of humanity has been my motto all through life. Even though I die I shall still work for the salvation of India, for the salvation of mankind!"

Though he was jovial and fun-loving like a child, none failed to notice that behind the merry and sociable exterior he hid a mighty fire. And few would be prepared for those sudden outbursts of the highest philosophical truths that poured forth from his lips between the commonplace acts and talks of daily life, sweeping his listeners off their feet. He could set himself to any task, or engage himself in secular occupation with as much habit of concentration as he would apply to a religious act. But nothing was commonplace about him,

His frankness was as pronounced a phenomenon of his personality as his sweetness. Once he told some American friends with whom he was staying in their country-house for the recuperation of his health, "What ! See the same faces day in and day out for six weeks !" His face wore a bored look. The old Sadhu's spirit of restlessness was upon him ; he was impatient to go out into the whirl of work again, from his enforced rest. But to his friends these words caused amusement only, as they knew his sweet, childlike wilfulness and loved him for it. To his *gurubhais* he was equally frank. He could be himself with them. And all loved him, though to all he had sometime or other shown the strenuous side of his nature, even as he had actually chastised the Swami Akhandananda who, not heeding his command at Alwar that he be left alone, had followed him to the town of Mandavi, where he had become the guest of a rich and pious lady, in his Parivrajaka days. And, again, when the Swami Trigunatita disobeying his injunction not to follow him, traced him to Porebandar and got himself admitted to his presence, he bid him quit the place at once, threatening to drive him out as a madman ! Though he had unbounded love for his *gurubhais*, he steeled his heart against it so as to free himself from "the last and the greatest of his bondage in the Sannyasin life," as he termed it. Moreover, a mighty struggle was raging within him, as he was then trying to find out finally for himself the nature of the Mission entrusted to him by his Master, and was equipping himself for it. His *gurubhais*, however, unshakable in their faith towards their leader, never misunderstood him, and though pained at heart, always submitted to his bidding, even if it seemed unreasonable and unjustified.

Serious at times, to the point of being almost unapproachable, the Swami could be as jolly as a sprightly boy ; and he enjoyed nothing so much as talking freely to simple-minded folks and listening to their tales. In the Punjab, after his first return from the West, he chanced to be travelling in a bullock-cart and entered into conversation with the driver,

He soon learned that the latter in common with many ignorant people in the upper Provinces, suspected the Bengalis as a race of magicians. The man, thinking the Swami to be an up-country Sadhu, took him into his confidence and said, "Baba, never go to Bengal ! They are a dangerous lot there ! They are all magicians. They will bewitch you !" The Swami chuckled with merriment over this remark, and repeated it on several occasions to his friends and *guru bhais*.

Much has already been written of the Swami's readiness at repartee. But there is one among innumerable instances on the point that may be recorded here. While in America he was once, without being aware of the character of his host, the guest of a fanatical temperance agitator, who abhorred smoking as much as drinking. His dinner finished, the Swami drew from his pocket his pipe, filled it with some excellent tobacco and commenced enjoying it. Entering the room, his host broke out in a fury shouting, "Well, Sir, if God intended that man should smoke, don't you think He would have furnished him with a chimney !" The Swami replied gently, "He has done better ! He has given man the brains to invent a pipe !"

The Swami, however, could occasionally be even obstinate. It was not a reprehensible obstinacy, but rather a marked decidedness to have his own way in things, and to follow his own convictions unless shown a better reason, to which he was always open. In his youth there were instances of this, even in his dealings with Sri Ramakrishna. So greatly did he feel for the sufferings of those who were laid under a social ban, that he would not mind incurring the displeasure of any one, even of his own Master, by showing his practical sympathy with their lot. As for instance, once when Sri Ramakrishna had for certain reasons, forbidden all his boy-disciples, except Noren, to eat food cooked by one of his women disciples, and the Swami heard of the anguish caused to her by such an interdict, he went to her house and brought comfort to her by partaking of his

meal cooked by herself. In his dealings with men he was as free as a child, as loving and sympathetic as a brother, as forgiving and ever ready to overlook faults and weaknesses as a mother, and again, he was like a prudent father admonishing his children for their failings and lapses, and like a schoolmaster severely rating people for their intellectual obstinacy, bigotry, religious hypocrisy, or their perverted ways, and so forth. He was indeed a stern preacher of Eternal Truths, a born leader of men, and withal, a kind friend a loving companion, and a willing servant, all in one.

In him all the faculties of head, heart and mind were balanced in a harmony of power and perfection. Religiously, he emphasised the spirit, rather than the ecclesiastical form ; and, nationally, he preached Man-Making, leaving the details of nationality and nation-making to take care of themselves. In a still larger perspective the Swami's thought embraced the whole of Humanity. Humanity to him was God embodied ; service to Humanity was therefore worship ; and in the Grand Revelation, all the activities of man, whatever their character, be it the lowest or the highest, the most artistic or the most commonplace, were as so many rays through which the Spirit manifested Itself. Humanity was an all-comprehensive Unit, whose Spirit and Self was God. To be truly Human was, to the Swami's mind, to be, indeed, divine.

None could measure the charm of his personality. It was inexplicable, for the light in his eyes, the music of his voice, the beauty and the majesty of his physical appearance, combined with numerous godly virtues of mind and heart and soul, rendered it difficult to touch upon any one attractive element as supreme,—and all made him irresistible as a Man, as a thinker and as a Teacher.

Faults and weaknesses he had, no doubt ; and what saint had them not ? In his case those were, in the eyes of his disciples and followers, as ornaments, like the ashes, the snakes and the blue poison on the body of Shiva Mahadeva. Moments of stress, passion and desire he had

surely; and what saint had them not? They were of the body and they died with the body. They were, in the words of his Master, "put upon him by my Divine Mother like a thin film of Maya (which can be rent at any moment), so that his body may last and he may be able to work," and fulfil his mission of disseminating life and light to struggling humanity. Otherwise, "he would fly unto the very Highest and be merged in the Absolute."

Of him one has truly said: "Such a wonderful combination of beauty of form, talents, learning, oratory, interpretation of the Shastras, working for the good of others, Sadhana, control over the passions, in one person, was a unique phenomenon! Only those who lived with him could understand! He was verily Sankara in wisdom, Buddha in large-heartedness, Narada in Bhakti, Sukadeva in the knowledge of Brahman, Brihaspati in argumentation, the God of love Himself in beauty of form, Arjuna in courage, and Vyasa in the knowledge of the Shastras!" Of him it can be truly said by his disciples what was told by him with regard to his Master: "His character was so great that if I or any other of his disciples spent hundreds of lives, we could not do justice to a millionth part of what he really was."

What a luminous personality was his! What a divine character shed its brilliance over the world for a time before our very eyes! How tragic a calamity, therefore, from a mortal viewpoint, his passing from the world at a comparatively early age! But it was only the culmination of Life,—victory unto the very end! *Wah Guruki Fateh!*

*HARI OM TAT SAT!*





# APPENDIX.



# APPENDIX A.

## REMINISCENCES.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AT TRIVANDRUM,—DEC. 1892.

*By Prof. K. Sundararaman, M.A.*

I met Swami Vivekananda for the first time at Trivandrum in December 1892, and was then privileged to see and know a good deal of him. He came to Trivandrum in the course of an extended Indian tour, fulfilling the time-honoured practice obtaining among Indian monks of paying a visit to, and making *tapas*, at the four sacred shrines in the four corners of the *Punya-Bhumi*, viz., Badari Kedara, Dwarka, Puri, and Ramesvaram, and claiming the hospitality and obeisance due to his sacred order from the Hindu householder. He came to me accompanied by a Mohammedan guide. My second son—a little boy of 12, who has since passed away—took him for, and announced him to me as, a Mohammedan too, as he well might from his costume which was quite unusual for a Hindu Sannyasin of Southern India. I took him upstairs, entered into conversation, and made him due obeisance as soon as I learned what he was. Almost the first thing he asked me to do was to arrange for his Mohammedan attendant's meals. His Mohammedan companion was a peon in the Cochin State service, and had been detailed to accompany him to Trivandrum by the then Secretary to the Dewan, Mr. W. Ramaiya, B. A., formerly Principal of the Vizagapatam College. For himself the Swami would take no introduction, or have any sort of arrangement previously made for his comfort while on the way or after reaching Trivandrum. The Swami had taken almost nothing except a little milk during the two previous days, and only after his Mohammedan peon had been provided with meals and taken leave would he have any thought bestowed on himself.

Within a few minutes' conversation, I found that the Swami was a mighty man. Having ascertained from him that, since leaving Ernakulam he had taken almost nothing, I asked him what food he was accustomed to. He replied, "Anything you like; we Sannyasis, have no tastes." We had some little conversation, as there was yet an interval of a few minutes before dinner. On learning that the Swami was a Bengalee,

I made the observation that the Bengalee nation had produced many great men—and, foremost of them all, the Brahmo preacher, Keshub Chandra Sen. It was then that the Swami mentioned to me the name, and expatiated briefly on the eminent spiritual endowments, of his Guru, Sri Ramakrishna, and took my breath completely away by the remark that Keshub was a mere child when compared with Sri Ramakrishna,—that not only he, but many eminent Bengalees of a generation past, had been influenced by the sage,—that Keshub had in later life received the benefit of his inspiration and had undergone some considerable change for the better in his religious views,—that many Europeans had sought the acquaintance of Sri Ramakrishna and regarded him as a semi-divine personage,—and that no less a man than the late Director of Public Instruction in Bengal, Mr. C. H. Tawney, had written a paper on the character, genius, catholicity and inspiring power of the great sage

All this conversation had occupied us while the Swami's food was being prepared and during the time he was breaking his nearly two days' fast by a hearty dinner. The Swami's presence, his voice, the glitter of his eye, and the flow of his words and ideas were so inspiring that I excused myself that day from attending at the Palace of the late Martanda Varma, the First Prince of Travancore, who was prosecuting his M. A. studies under my tuition,—my services having been lent to the Travancore State by the Madras Government to prepare him first for the B. A. Degree and later for the M. A. The Swami having had some rest, I took him in the evening to the house of Prof. Rangacharya, who was then Professor of Chemistry in the Trivandrum College,—his services, too, having then been lent to the Travancore State—and who was even then at the height of his reputation as a scholar and man of science not only in Travancore, but throughout Southern India. Not finding him at home, we drove to the Trivandrum Club. There I introduced the Swami to various gentlemen present, and to Prof. Rangacharya when he came in later on, to the late Prof. Sundaram Pillai, M. A., and others among whom I distinctly remember a late Brāhman Dewan Peishkar and my friend Narayana Menon—who, I believe, is one of the Dewan Peishkars to-day in Travancore,—owing to an incident which, however trifling in itself, brought out a prominent characteristic of the Swami,—how he was all eyes and noted closely all that was passing around him and could use them effectively, how he combined with his rare gentleness and sweetness of temper, the presence of mind and the power of retort which could quickly silence an opponent. Mr. Narayana Menon had, while leaving the Club earlier in the evening saluted the Brāhman Dewan Peishkar and the latter had returned it in the time-honoured fashion in which Brāhmins who maintain old forms

of etiquette return the salute of Sudras,—i. e. by raising the left hand a little higher than the right. Many members of the Club had come and gone, and at last five of us were left,—the Swami, the Dewan Peishkar, his brother, Prof. Rangacharya, and myself. As we were dispersing, the Dewan Peishkar made his obeisance to the Swami which the latter returned in the manner usual with Hindu monks by simply uttering the name of Narayana. This roused the Peishkar's ire,—for he wanted the Swami's obeisance, too, in the fashion in which he had made his own. The Swami then turned on him and said :—"If you could exercise your customary form of etiquette in returning Narayana Menon's greeting, why should you resent my own adoption of the Sannyasin's customary mode of acknowledging your obeisance to me?" This reply had the desired effect, and next day the gentleman's brother came to us and conveyed some kind of apology for the awkward incident of the night previous.

During the evening,—short as his stay had been at the Club premises—the Swami's personality had made an impression on all. Hindu society in Trivandrum town presents a strikingly motley appearance, as all the race and caste varieties peculiar to Southern India commingle within its narrow limits. The Trivandrum Club of which all the leading educated men are members presents, too, every evening a similarly motley gathering representative of all those varieties, or almost all. The Swami entered freely into conversation with all,—but in Professor Rangacharya he found the man most near to himself in all that he most valued in life—an almost encyclopædic learning, a rare command of eloquent expression, the power to call up readily all his vast intellectual resources to point a moral or prick the bubble of a plausible argument, an emotional temperament which unerringly pointed to the love of whatever is good and noble in man and beautiful in nature and art. One remark of Professor Sundaram Pillai—that he considered himself, as a Dravidian, entirely outside the Hindu polity—put him somewhat out of court with the Swami, who, later on, remarked of him that eminent as he was as a scholar, he had thoughtlessly given himself away to the sway of race prejudice, which already during his travels the Swami had noted as an unpleasant characteristic of certain South Indian minds of the unbalanced or mediocre type.

The Swami paid a visit the next day to Prince Martanda Varma, who, as already stated, was then under my tuition and studying for the M. A. Degree, and who, when informed by me of the remarkable intellectual and imposing presence of my visitor, communicated to the Swami his desire for an interview. Of course I accompanied the Swami and was present at the conversation between him and the Prince. The

Swami happened to mention his visit to various Native Princes and courts during his travels. This greatly interested the Prince who interrogated him regarding his impressions. The Swami then told him that, of all the Hindu ruling princes he had met, he had been most impressed with the capacity, patriotism, energy and foresight of H. H. the Gaekwar of Baroda,—that he had also known and greatly admired the high qualities of the small Rajput Chief of Khetri,—and that, as he came more and more south, he had found a growing deterioration in the character and capacity of Indian princes and chiefs. The Prince then asked him if he had seen his uncle, the ruler of Travancore. The Swami had not yet had time to arrange for a visit to His Highness. I may here mention at once that a visit was arranged for two days later through the good offices of the then Dewan, Mr. Sankara Subbier. The Maharajah received the Swami, inquired of his welfare, and told him that the Dewan would provide him with every convenience during his stay both in Trivandrum and elsewhere within the State. The visit lasted only for two or three minutes and so the Swami returned a little disappointed, though impressed with H. H.'s gracious and dignified deportment.

To return to the Swami's conversation with the Prince. The Prince inquired regarding his impressions of the late Maharajah of the Mysore State, whose guest the Swami had been for several days. The gist of the Swami's view was that the Maharajah, like many other Indian rulers, was a good deal under leading strings, that he could not or would not assert himself, and that that had produced some undesirable results. One incident he mentioned may be of some interest. I cannot give names. The Swami ventured to advise the Maharajah to remove from his neighbourhood a man of some reputation, who was supposed to be a favourite of his and of whom there had prevailed, rightly or wrongly, possibly wrongly, an unfavourable impression in the public mind. To this request, the Maharajah made the strange reply that, as the Swami was one of the greatest men he had seen and destined to fulfil a great mission in the land, he should not expose his life to the risk there certainly existed in an Indian Prince's palace for one who openly ventured to disparage, or to endeavour to secure the dismissal of, one of his favourites. This throws light on the way in which the Swami and the Maharajah understood themselves and understood each other. The Swami then made earnest inquiry regarding Prince Martanda Varma's studies, and his aims in life. The Prince replied that he had already taken some interest in the doings of the people of Travancore and that he had resolved to do what he could, as a leading and loyal subject of the Maharajah and as a member of the ruling family, to advance their welfare,

The Prince was struck, like all others who had come into contact with him, with the Swami's striking figure and attractive features; and, being an amateur photographer, asked the Swami for a sitting and took a fine photograph which he skilfully developed into an impressive picture and later on sent as an interesting exhibit to the next Fine Arts Exhibition held in the Madras Museum. On leaving the Prince's presence, the Swami remarked to me that he thought there was plenty of promise in him, but that he trusted that the University education which he was receiving would not spoil him,—evidently meaning that he might be left more to himself, the graduate that he was already, than he seemed to be by being kept under my further care and instruction. But in fact, the Prince was only being helped to think for himself and no longer kept under control and, after another year or so, discontinued his studies.

Throughout the second day and even during the greater part of the third, we were left a good deal to ourselves, except for a brief visit in the evening from Prof. Rangacharya. The Swami found me much inclined to orthodox Hindu modes of life and beliefs. Perhaps that was why he spoke a good deal in the vein suited to my tastes and views, though occasionally he burst out into spirited denunciation of the observance of mere *Desacharam*, or local usage. As I keep no diary and write only from the tattered remains of an impression left on the mind by events which took place fully twenty years back, I cannot vouch for the exact order of topics as they arose on this and other days. I had occasional and deeply interesting conversations with the Swami, sometimes when we were left to ourselves, at other times when visitors, to whom the news had been taken that a highly learned and gifted Sannyasin from the North was staying with me, called to see him and earn the spiritual merit of rendering him homage in due form.

The Swami once made a spirited attack on the extravagant claims put forth by science on men's allegiance. "If religion has its superstitions," the Swami remarked, "science has its superstitions too." Both the mechanical and evolutionary theories are, on examination, found inadequate and unsatisfying, and still there are large numbers of men who speak of the entire universe as an open secret. Agnosticism has also bulked large in men's esteem, but has only betrayed its ignorance and arrogance by ignoring the laws and truths of the Indian science of thought-control. Western psychology has miserably failed to cope with the superconscious aspects and laws of human nature. Where European science has stopped short, Indian psychology comes in and explains, illustrates and teaches how to render real the practical laws appertaining to higher states of existence and experience. Religion alone—and especially the religion of the Indian sages—can understand the subtle and secret

workings of the human mind "and conquer its unspiritual cravings so as to realise the One Existence and comprehend all else as its limitation and manifestation when under the bondage of matter. Another subject on which the Swami spoke was the distinction between the world of gross matter (*Laukika*) and the world of fine matter (*Alaukika*). The Swami explained how both kept man within the bondage of the senses, and only he who rose superior to both could attain to the freedom which is the aim of all life and raise himself above the petty vanities of the world, whether of men or gods. The Swami spoke to me of the institution of caste, and held that the Brāhman would continue to live as long as he found unselfish work to do and freely gave of his knowledge and all to the rest of the population. In the actual words of the Swami which are still ringing in my ears, "The Brāhman has done great things for India ; he is doing great things for India, and he is destined to do still greater things for India in the future." The Swami also declared himself sternly against all interference against the Shastric usages and injunctions in regard to the status and marriage of women. Women, as well as the lower classes and castes, must receive a Sanskrit education, imbibe the ancient spiritual culture, and realise in practice all the spiritual ideals of the Rishis ; and then they would take into their own hands all questions affecting their own status and solve them in the light thrown on them by their own knowledge of the truths of religion and the enlightened perception of their own needs and requirements. I also asked the Swami for his views on the question of sea-voyage. He replied that the social environment in Western countries must be better prepared than it was and is by the preaching of the Vedānta before Brāhmins and other caste Hindus could find it suitable for their accustomed life of ceremonial purity and those time worn and time-honoured restrictions as regards food, drink, etc., which have made them for ages almost the sole champions of, and channels for, the gospel of mercy. There was not the least objection, however, in the case of Hindus who were already free from, or were prepared to throw aside, all such restrictions.

On the third and fourth day of the Swami's stay with me, I sent information to a valued friend of mine in Trivandrum, who is my senior in years and still living, a man for whom, on account of his character, culture, purity of life, and sincere devotion to the Lord, I felt then, and have continued to feel, attached by the ties of genuine regard and friendship,—M. R. Ry. S. Rama Rao, then Director of Vernacular Instruction in Travancore. Mr. Rama Rao felt infinitely attracted to the Swami by the power of his spirituality and devotional fervour and asked him for the favour of having *bhiksha* in his house, which the Swami



graciously consented to do. After the *bhiksha* was over, they returned together, and the Swami continued his instructive and fervid discourses to us. I remember vividly how once Mr. Rama Rao wished the Swami to explain *Indriya Nigraham*, the restraint of the senses. The Swami then launched forth into a vivid narration of a story very much like what is usually told of Lila-Suka, the famous singer of *Krishna Karnamritam*. The vivid picture he gave of the last stage in which the hero is taken to Brindavan and puts out his own eyes when he gets severely handled for his amorous pursuit of a Sett's daughter there, and then proclaims his repentance and his resolve to end his days in unswerving meditation on the divine Sri Krishna at the scene of the Lord's sportive deeds in the days of His childhood on earth, bursts on my mind, even at this distance of twenty-one years, with somewhat of the effect of those irresistibly charming and undying notes on the flute by the late miraculous musician Sarabha Sastriar, of Kumbakonam. The Swami's concluding words after mentioning the closing incident of putting out the eyes were—"Even this extreme step must, if necessary, be taken as a preliminary to the restraint of the wandering and unsubjugated senses and the consequent turning of the mind towards the Lord."

On the third or fourth day of his stay, I made enquiries, at the Swami's request, regarding the whereabouts of Mr. Manmatha Nath Bhattacharya, —now deceased—who was then Assistant to the Accountant-General, Madras, and who had come down to Trivandrum on official duty in connection with some defalcations alleged to have taken place at the Resident's Treasury. From that time the Swami used daily to spend his mornings with Mr. Bhattacharya and stay for dinner. One day, however, I complained, and unfortunately there was a visitor, too, to detain him, as I shall presently have to state. The Swami made a characteristic reply on seeing how unwilling I was to part with him, "We, Bengalees, are a clannish people." He said also that Mr. Bhattacharya had been his school or college mate, and that he had an additional claim for consideration as he was the son of the late world-renowned scholar, Pandit Mahesh Chandra Nyayaratna, formerly the Principal of the Calcutta Sanskrit College. The Swami, also, told me that he had long taken no fish food, as the South Indian Brâhmans whose guest he had been throughout his South Indian tour were forbidden both fish and flesh, and would fain avail himself of this opportunity to have his accustomed fare. I at once expressed my loathing for the taking of fish or flesh as food. The Swami said in reply that the ancient Brâhmans of India were accustomed to take meat and even beef and were called upon to kill cows and other animals in Yajnas or for giving Madhuparka to guests. He also held that the introduction and spread of Buddhism led

to the gradual discontinuance of flesh as food, though the Hindu Shastras had always expressed a theoretical preference for those who avoided the use of flesh-foods,—and that the disfavour into which flesh had fallen was one of the chief causes of the gradual decline of the national strength, and the final overthrow of the national independence of the united ancient Hindu races and states of India. He informed me, at the same time, that in recent years Bengalees had, as a community, begun to freely use animal food of several kinds and that they generally got a Brāhman to sprinkle a little water consecrated by the utterance of a few Mantras over a whole flock of sheep and then, without any further qualms of religious conscience, proceeded to hang, draw, and quarter them. The Swami's opinion, at least as expressed in conversation with me, was that the Hindus must freely take to the use of animal food if India was at all to cope with the rest of the world in the present race for power and predominance among the world's communities, whether within the British Empire, or beyond its limits. I, as a Brāhman of strong orthodox leanings, expressed my entire dissent from his views and held that the Vedic religion had alone taught to man his kinship and unity with nature, that man should not yield to the play of sensuous cravings or the narrow passion for political dominance. The ennobling gospel of universal mercy which had been the unique possessor of the Hindus, especially of the Brāhmins of South India, should never be abandoned as mistaken, out of date, or uncivilised, and that the world can and ought to make a great ethical advance by adopting a humane diet, and also that no petty considerations of national strength or revival should prevail against the adoption of a policy of justice and humanity towards our dumb brother-Jivas of the brute creation. Knowing, as I fully did, the Swami's views on this question, I was not surprised to learn that, while in America he had been in the habit of taking animal food, and I think he treated with silent contempt the denunciations and calumnies directed against him on this account.

The Swami visited the Dewan by appointment one evening, when this same subject somehow cropped up, and the Dewan held views identical with mine and even went on to express his views that animals had never been killed, or flesh used in Yajnas in ancient times. This led to some little controversy in which the Dewan's son-in-law, the late Mr. A. Ramier who was then his secretary, took sides with the Swami, so far as the use of flesh in Yajnas was concerned. The Swami had also some little talk with the Dewan, on the subject of Bhakti. How the subject came in or what were the details of the Swami's conversation has clean dropped out of my memory. Mr. Sankara Subbier, the Dewan, was one of the most learned men of his time and even at his advanced age—for he was then 58—was a voracious reader of books of all sorts, and daily

adding to the vast stores of his knowledge. The Swami, however, was not much impressed, nor could the Dewan spare time for a prolonged meeting. So we took our leave. As the Swami parted, the Dewan assured him that every want or wish of his would be attended to, and every attention paid to him throughout the State, wherever he might go. The Swami, however, wanted nothing and asked for nothing.

I have above referred to a visitor detaining the Swami one morning from his usual visit to his Bengalee countryman, Mr. Bhattacharya. This visitor was the Assistant Dewan or Peishkar in the Huzoor office, Trivandrum,—one Mr. Piravi Perumal Pillay. He seemed to have come on purpose to ascertain what the Swami knew of various cults and religions in India and elsewhere, and began by putting forward various objections to the Advaita Vedanta. He soon found out that the Swami was a master from whose stores it was more important to draw what one could for inspiration without loss of time than to examine what were the depths and heights in which his mind could range. I have seen the Swami exhibit on this occasion (as on another during his famous sojourn of nine days at Kernan Castle on the Madras Marina in March 1897) his rare power of guaging in a moment what is the mental reach of a self-confident visitor, and then turning him unconsciously away to ground suitable to him and then giving him the benefit of his guidance and inspiration. On the present occasion, the Swami happened to quote from Lalita Vistara some verses descriptive of Buddha's Vairagya, and in such an entrancingly melodious voice that the visitor's heart quite melted and he speedily fell into a passive listening mood, which the Swami skilfully utilised to carry home to his mind a lasting impression of Buddha's great renunciation, His unflinching search after truth, His final discovery of it and His unwearied ministry of forty-five years among men and women of all castes, ranks, and conditions of life. The discourse occupied nearly an hour, and at its close the Swami's visitor was so visibly affected and acknowledged himself as feeling so much raised for the time being above the sordid realities and vanities of life, that he made many devout prostrations at the Swami's feet and declared when leaving, that he had never seen his like and would never forget the discourse he had impressed upon him.

During this and the following days various topics came up, upon which I had the pleasure of knowing the Swami's views. Many of these have passed out of my recollection, but two of them come home to me with more or less vividness just at present. Once I happened to ask him to deliver a public lecture. The Swami said that he had never before spoken in public and would surely prove a lamentable and ludicrous failure. Upon this I inquired how, if this were true, he could face the august assembly of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago at which he

told me he had been asked by the Maharajah of Mysore to be present as the representative of Hinduism. The Swami gave me a reply which at the time seemed to me decidedly evasive, namely, that if it was the will of the Supreme that he should be made His mouthpiece and do a great service to the cause of truth and holy living, He surely would endow him with the gifts and qualities needed for it. I said I was incredulous as to the probability or possibility of a special intervention of this kind, as, even though I had at this time much faith in the central and fundamental verities of Hinduism, I had not studied its source-books and had not obtained an insight into their rationale, or even had had so much of a practical realisation of those verities as would enable me to perceive the truth underlying a statement like the one made by the Swami. He at once came down on me with a sledge-hammer stroke, —denouncing me as one who, in spite of my apparent Hindu orthodoxy so far as my daily observances and verbal professions went, was at heart somewhat of a sceptic, because I seemed to him prepared to set limits of my own to the extent of the Lord's power of beneficent interposition in the affairs of the universe.

On another occasion, too, some difference of opinion existed in regard to a question of much importance in Indian ethnology. The Swami held that wherever a Brāhman was found with a dark skin, it was clearly a case of atavism, demonstrating the descent of a characteristic due to Dravidian admixture. To this I replied that colour was essentially a changeable feature in man and largely dependent on such conditions as climate, food, the nature of the occupation as entailing an out-door or in-door life, and so on. The Swami combated my view and maintained that the Brāhmins were as much a mixed race as the rest of mankind, and that their belief in their racial purity was largely founded on fiction. I quoted high authority—C. L. Brace and others—against him in regard to the purity of Indian races, but the Swami was obdurate and maintained his own view.

I must get on rapidly to the close. But I must not fail to mention the fact that during all the time he stayed, he took captive every heart within the home. To every one of us he was all sweetness, all tenderness, all grace. My sons were frequently in his company, and one of them still swears by him and has the most vivid and endearing recollections of his visit and of his striking personality. The Swami learned a number of Tamil words and took delight in conversing in Tamil with the Brāhman cook in our home. It hardly seemed as if there was a stranger moving in our midst. When he left, it seemed for a time as if the light had gone out of our home.

Just as he was about to leave, accompanied by his Bengalee companion, Mr. Bhattacharya,—it was on the 22nd December 1892—an

incident happened which is worth recording. Pandit Vanchisvara Sastri—a master of that most difficult branch of learning, Sanskrit grammar, and highly honoured by all who knew him for his piety, learning and modesty—was a dependent of the first Prince of Travancore, who, at my request, had secured his services as teacher of Sanskrit to my son. During all these days of the Swami's stay he never once came to my house. As the Swami was leaving, he made his appearance and implored me to arrange for an interview, however short, even if it be of a few minutes' duration. He had heard of the arrival and stay with me of a highly learned Sannyasi from the North, but had been ill and could not come. He was anxious to have some conversation. The Swami and Mr. Bhattacharya were just then descending the stairs to get into their carriage and drive away. The Pandit entreated me in the most pressing manner to ask the Swami for at least a few minutes' delay. On being informed of this, the Swami entered into a brief conversation with him in Sanskrit, which lasted seven or eight minutes only. At that time I knew no Sanskrit, and so I could not understand what they talked about. But the Pandit told me that it related to some knotty and controverted point in Vyakarana-sastra and that, even during that brief conversation, the Swami showed that he could display his accurate knowledge of Sanskrit grammar and his perfect mastery of the Sanskrit language.

With this the Swami's stay of nine days had come to a close. It seems to me in my recollection of to-day somewhat of a nine days' wonder, but the impression is one which never can be effaced. The Swami's towering personality and marvellous career must be said to mark an epoch in history whose full significance can become discernible only in some distant future time. But to those who have had the privilege of knowing him intimately, he seems to be only comparable to some of those immortal spiritual personages who have shed an undying lustre on this Holy Land. It is very pleasant to have recorded these personal reminiscences, meagre as they are, and even though they can add little or nothing to our knowledge of the Master, who enchanted and enchained the heart of human society in the East and in the West in his time and generation.

# Swami Vivekananda in California.

## *Reminiscences By A Californian Disciple.*

It is now more than ten years since the Swami Vivekananda lectured to Californian audiences; it seems but yesterday. It was here as elsewhere; the audiences were his from the outset, and remained his to the end. They were swept along on the current of his thought without resistance. Many there were who did not want to resist: whose pleasure and novelty it was to have light shown into the hidden recesses of their minds by the proximity of a luminous personality. There were a few who would have resisted if they could, but whose powers of resistance were neutralised by the irresistible logic, acumen and child-like simplicity of the Great Teacher. Indeed, there were a few who arose to demur, but who resumed their seats either in smiling acquiescence or in bewildered impotency.

The Swami's personality impressed itself on the mind with visual intensity. The speaking eyes, the wealth of facial expression and gesticulation; the wondrous Sanskrit chanting, sonorous, melodious, impressing one with the sense of mystic potency; the translations following in smiling confidence,—all these set off by the spectacular apparel of the Hindu Sannyasin!—who can forget them?

As a lecturer he was unique: never referring to notes, as most lecturers do; and though he repeated many discourses on request, they were never mere repetitions. He seemed to be giving something of himself, to be speaking from a super-experience. The most abstruse points of the Vedanta were retrieved from the domain of mere speculation by a vital something which seemed to emanate from his presence. It was his practice to look deliberately and leisurely over his audience before beginning a discourse. Then beginning in a conversational tone and manner, his voice would run the gamut of impassioned modulation and impressive periods. That style of speaking was very effective for those within easy range of his voice, but it must have been an exasperation to those in the back of the hall, for cries of "louder!" were common from that quarter. His utterances were dynamic and constructive: arousing thought and directing it into synthetic processes. Thus he was not only a lecturer, but a teacher of the highest order as well.

Encouraging questions at the conclusion of each lecture, he would go to any length to make his questioners understand. On one occasion after persistent queries by a number of persons, it occurred to some one that they were plying the Swami too insistently with questions,

and he remarked to that effect. "Ask all the questions you like—the more the better," was the Swami's good-natured reply. "That is what I am here for, and I won't leave you till you understand." The applause was so prolonged that he was obliged to wait till it subsided before he could continue. At times he literally startled people into belief by his answers. To the question, after a lecture on Reincarnation, "Swami, do you remember your past life?" "Yes, clearly, even when I was a little boy," he answered quickly and seriously.

Quick and, when necessary sharp at repartee, he met all opposition with the utmost good nature and even enjoyment. His business was to make his hearers understand and he succeeded as, perhaps, no other lecturer on abstruse subjects ever did. To popularise abstractions, to place them within the mental grasp of even very ordinary intellects was his achievement. He reached them all. "In India," he said, "they tell me that I ought not to teach Advaita Vedanta to the people at large. But I say that I can make even a child understand it. You cannot begin too early to teach the highest spiritual truths."

Once at the conclusion of a lecture he thus announced his next lecture: "To-morrow night I shall lecture on *The Mind: Its Powers and Possibilities*. Come to hear me. I have something to say to you. I shall do a little bomb-throwing." Here he glanced smilingly over the audience, and then with a waive of his hand added, "Come on! It will do you good." The next night there was barely standing-room. He kept his word. Bombs were thrown, and he, of all people, knew how to throw them with telling effect. In this lecture he devoted considerable time to the subject of chastity as a means of strengthening the mind. As a practice to develop purity, he expounded the theory of looking upon every woman as one's mother. When he had presented the idea, he paused and, as though in response to inarticulate questionings from the audience, said, "O yes, this is a theory. I stand up here to tell you about this beautiful theory; but when I think of my own mother I know that to me she is different to any other woman. There *is* a difference. We cannot deny it. But we see this difference because we think of ourselves as bodies. This theory is to be fully realised in meditation. These truths are first to be heard, then to be meditated upon."

He held purity to be for the householder as well as for the monk, and laid great stress on that point. "The other day a young Hindu came to see me," he said. "He had been living in this country for about two years, and had been suffering from ill health for some time. In course of our talk, he said that the theory of chastity must be all wrong, because the doctors in this country had advised him against it. They told him that it was against the law of nature. I told him to go back to India, where he belonged, and to listen to the teachings of his ancestors, who had

practised chastity for thousands of years." Then turning a face puckered into an expression of unutterable disgust, he thundered, "You doctors in this country who hold that chastity is against the law of nature, don't know what you are talking about. You don't know the meaning of the word purity. You are beasts ! beasts ! I say, with the morals of a tomcat, if that is the best you have to say on that subject !" Here he glanced defiantly over the audience, challenging opposition by his very glance. No voice was raised, though there were several physicians present.

Bombs were thrown in all of his lectures. Audiences were jolted out of hereditary ruts, and New Thought students, so-called, were subjected to scathing though constructive criticisms without mercy. Smilingly, he would announce the most stupendous Vedantic conceptions so opposed to Christian theologic dogma ; then pause an instant,—how many, many times, and with such winsome effect !—with his teeth pressed over his lower lip, as though with bated breath, observing the result. Imagine, if you can, greater violence done to the traditional teachings of Christendom than by his fiery injunction, "Don't repent ! Don't repent !—Spit, if you must, but go on ! Don't hold yourselves down by repenting ! Throw off the load of sin, if there is such a thing, by knowing your true selves,—The Pure ! The Ever Free !... That man alone is blasphemous who tells you that you are sinners...." And again, "This world is a superstition. We are hypnotised into believing it real. The process of salvation is the process of de-hypnotisation ....This universe is just the play of the Lord—that is all. It is all just for fun. There can be no reason for His doing anything. Know the Lord if you would understand His play. Be His playfellow and He will tell you all.....And to you, who are philosophers, I say that to ask for a reason for the existence of the universe is illogical because it implies limitation in God, which you do not admit." Then he entered into one of his wonderful expositions of the salient features of the Advaita Vedanta.

In the questions which usually followed a talk on this subject, there was almost sure to be the question, "But, Swami, what will become of one's individuality when he realises his oneness with God?" He would laugh at this question, and playfully ridicule it. He would say : "You people in this country are so afraid of losing your in-di-vid-u-al-i-ties," drawling out the word in laughing mockery. "Why, you are not individuals yet. When you know God you will be. When you realise your whole nature, you will attain your true individualities, not before. In knowing God you cannot lose anything worth having... ..There is another thing I am constantly hearing in this country, and that is that we should 'live in harmony with nature !' Har-mo ny with nature," he ridiculed. "Why, don't you know that all the progress ever made in the world was made by fighting nature, by conquering nature ? There never



has been an exception. Trees live in harmony with nature. Perfect harmony there; no opposition there,—and no progress. We are to resist nature at every point if we are to make any progress. Something funny happens and nature says, 'laugh,' and we laugh. Someone we love dies, and nature says, 'cry,' and we cry—"

"But," interposed an old lady in the audience, "it would be very hard not to mourn for those we love and I think we would be very hard-hearted if we did not mourn." "O yes, Madam," he replied, "it is hard, no doubt. But what of that? All great accomplishments are hard. Nothing worth while comes easy. But don't lower the ideal because it is difficult to attain. Hold the banner of freedom aloft! You do not weep, Madam, because you want to, but because nature forces you. When nature says—'Weep!' say 'No! I shall not weep!' Strength! Strength! Strength!—say that to yourself day and night. You are the Strong! The Pure! The Free! No weakness in you; no sin; no misery!"

Such statements, vitalised by his tremendous personality, placed him in the same class with the world's greatest spiritual teachers. During these lectures, one was suspended in a spiritual firmament by the proximity of a Soul to whom the world was really a joke, and to whom Consciousness, supercosmic, was the One and only Reality.

The Swami was blessed with an irrepressible sense of humour, which enlivened his lectures and classes, and at times relieved the tense element from embarrassing situations. Observe his parry to the question incredulously hurled at him at the close of a lecture which culminated in an impassioned outburst on the glory of God-Consciousness: "Swami, have you seen God?" "What!" he returned, his face lighting up with a happy smile, "Do I look like it,—a big fat man like me?"

On another occasion while he was expounding Advaita, an old man, sitting in the front row, arose deliberately, and with a look which said as plainly as words, "Let me get out of this place in a hurry," hobbled down the aisle and out of the hall, pounding the floor with his cane at every step. The Swami apparently enjoyed the situation, for amusement overspread his features as he paused to watch him. The attention of the audience was divided between the Swami, smiling, fun-loving, and the disgusted old man who had had enough of him.

The whimsical, playful side of the Swami's character would break out at any moment. Certain Theosophic and New Thought students were interested primarily in occult phenomena. One such asked, "Swami, did you ever see an elemental?" "O yes. We have them in India for breakfast," was the quick reply. Nor did he hesitate to joke about his own personality. At one time when looking at some works of art the Swami, surveying a painting of some corpulent monks, remarked, "Spiritual men are fat. See, how fat I am!" Again, speaking about the

power of prophecy in the saints he said, "Once when I was a little boy playing in the streets, a sage, passing by, put his hand on my head and said, 'My boy, you will be a great man some day.' And now see where I am!" At this little conceit his face fairly beamed with fun. There was nothing egotistical in such statements. His simple fun-loving nature carried his hearers along with him in the spirit of his joke. At another time: "The Christian idea of hell is not at all terrifying to me. I have read Dante's *Inferno* three times, but I must say that I find nothing terrible in it. There are many kinds of Hindu hells. When a glutton dies, for instance, he is surrounded by great quantities of the very best kinds of foods. He has a stomach a thousand miles long, and a mouth as small as a pinhead! Think of that!" During this lecture he got very warm owing to the poorly ventilated hall. On leaving the hall after the lecture, he was met by a chill blast of north wind. Gathering his coat tightly about him he said vehemently, "Well, if *this* isn't hell, I don't know what is."

Dilating on the life of the Sannyasin as compared to that of the householder he said, "Someone asked me if I was ever married." Here he paused to glance smilingly over the audience. A multitudinous titter was the response. Then the smile giving place to a look of horror, he continued. "Why, I wouldn't be married for anything. It is the devil's own game." Here he paused as though to give his words effect. Then raising his hand to check the audible appreciation that had begun, he went on with a quite serious expression overspreading his features, "There is one thing, however, that I have against the monastic system, and that is,"—(another pause)—"that it takes the best men away from the community." He did not attempt to stem the outburst that followed. He had his little joke and enjoyed it. On another occasion while speaking seriously he suddenly broke out in merriment, "As soon as a man gets a little sense he dies. He begins by having a big stomach which sticks out farther than his head. When he gains wisdom his stomach disappears and his head becomes prominent. Then he dies."

The Swami's assimilation of the world's maturest religious thought and his consummate power in expounding it, contrasted curiously with his youthful appearance, and much conjecture was rife as to his age. He must have known this, for he availed himself of an opportunity to have a little fun on this point at the expense of the audience. Alluding to his own age, which was *a propos* of the subject, he said, "I am only—" (breathless pause, anticipation) —"of a few years," he added mischievously. A sigh of disappointment ran over the audience. The Swami looked on waiting for the applause, which he knew was ready to break out. He enjoyed his own jokes as much as did the audience. Once he laughed outright at some particularly pointed joke which he

had just told. The house was in an uproar at once. The joke is irretrievably lost. What a pity! During his series of lectures on *The Ideals of India*, the fact was disclosed that he was a wonderful storyteller. Here, perhaps, he was at his best. He gave life to the ancient tales by telling them in his inimitable fashion, the subject giving full play to his unsurpassed power of interpretation, and to that wealth of facial expression which was his greatest personal charm. 'I love to tell these stories,' he said. 'They are the life of India. I have heard them since babyhood. I never get tired telling them.'

The Swami commanded reverence when he revealed himself to his audience in one of those wonderful waves of transcendental feeling which at times he did not try to check. As when he said, 'All faces are dear to me.....As it is possible to 'see Helen in an Ethiop's face,' so we must learn to see the Lord in all. All, even the very worst, are Mother's children. The universe, good and bad, is but the play of the Lord.'

In private interviews he was the ideal host, entering into conversation, argument or story-telling, not only without restraint, but with apparent enjoyment. His personal appearance on my first interview was a pleasurable shock from which I have never fully recovered. He had on a long grey dressing gown, and was sitting cross-legged on a chair, smoking a pipe, his long hair falling in wild disarray over his features. As I advanced he extended a cordial hand and bade me be seated. Memory delivers but fragments of those interviews. What remains vivid is the contact with the great Sannyasin—the impressions and impetus received—which refuses to be less than the greatest experience in life.

Speaking of spiritual training for the mind he said, 'The less you read the better. What are books but the vomitings of other men's minds? Why fill your mind with a load of stuff you will have to get rid of? Read the Gita and other good works on Vedanta. That is all you need.' Then again: 'The present system of education is all wrong. The mind is crammed with facts before it knows how to think. Control of the mind should be taught first. If I had my education to get over again, and had any voice in the matter, I would learn to master my mind first, and then gather facts, if I wanted them. It takes people a long time to learn things because they can't concentrate their minds at will....It took three readings for me to memorise Macaulay's History of England, while my mother memorised any sacred book in only one reading.....People are always suffering because they can't control their minds. To give an illustration, though a rather crude one: A man has trouble with his wife. She leaves him and goes with other men. She's a terror! But, poor fellow, he can't take his mind away from her, and so he suffers.'

I asked him to explain why the practice of begging, common among religious mendicants, was not opposed to renunciation. He replied, "It is a question of the mind. If the mind anticipates, and is affected by the results—that is bad, no doubt. The giving and receiving of alms should be free ; otherwise it is not renunciation. If you should put a hundred dollars on that table for me, and should expect me to thank you for it you could take it away again. I would not touch it. My living was provided for before I came here, before I was born. I have no concern about it. Whatever belongs to a man he will get. It was ready for him before he was born."

To the question, "What do you think about the Immaculate Conception of Jesus?" he replied. "That is an old claim. There have been many in India who have claimed that. I don't know anything about it. But for my part, I am glad that I had a natural father and mother." "But isn't such a theory opposed to the law of nature?" I ventured. "What is nature to the Lord? It is all His play," he replied as he knocked the ash from his pipe against the heel of his slipper, regardless of the carpeted floor. Then blowing through the stem to clear it, he continued, "We are slaves of nature. The Lord is the Master of nature. He can do as He pleases. He can take one or a dozen bodies at a time, if He chooses. and in any way He chooses. How can we limit Him?"

After answering at length various questions about Raja Yoga, he concluded with a friendly smile, "But why bother about Raja Yoga? There are other ways."

This interview was continued fifteen minutes beyond the time set for a class in Raja Yoga to be held in the front room of the house. We were interrupted by the lady in charge of affairs, rushing into the room and exclaiming, "Why, Swami! You have forgotten all about the Yoga class. It is fifteen minutes past time now, and the room is full of people." The Swami arose hastily to his feet, exclaiming to me, "O, excuse me! We will now go to the front room." I walked through the hall to the front room. He went through his bedroom, which was between the room we had been sitting in and the front room. Before I was seated he emerged from his room with his hair, (which I have said was in a state of wild disorder) neatly combed, and attired in his Sannyasin robe! Not more than one minute had elapsed from the time he started from his room with dishevelled hair and in lounging attire, till he came leisurely out into the front room ready to lecture. Speed and precision of action were evidently at his command. It was difficult at times, however, to persuade him to stir beyond the pace he had set for himself. When late for a lecture, for instance, it was sometimes impossible to induce him to hurry for the street car. In response to entreaties to hurry, he would drawl, "Why do you hurry me? If we don't catch that car, we will catch the next."

At these Yoga classes one came closer to the man and teacher than was possible in the lecture hall. The contact was more personal and the influence more direct. The embodiment of holiness, simplicity and wisdom, he seemed ; speaking with incisive power, and drawing one's mind more to God and renunciation than to proficiency in Raja Yoga practices.

After delivering a short lecture, he would seat himself cross-legged on the divan and direct in meditation such of the audience as remained for that purpose. His talk was on Raja Yoga, and the practical instruction on simple breathing exercises. He said in part : "You must learn to sit correctly ; then to breathe correctly. This develops concentration ; then comes meditation.....When practising breathing, think of your body as luminous.....Try to look down the spinal cord from the base of the brain to the base of the spine. Imagine that you are looking through the hollow Sushumna to the Kundalini. Then imagine that you see this Kundalini rising upward to the brain... ..Have patience. Great patience is necessary."

Such as voiced doubts and fears, he reassured by his, "I am with you now. Try to have a little faith in me." One was moved by his persuasive power when he said, "We learn to meditate that we may be able to think of the Lord. Raja Yoga is only a means to that end. The great Patanjali, author of Raja Yoga, never missed an opportunity to impress that idea upon his students. Now is the time for you who are young. Don't wait till you are old before you think of the Lord, for then you will not be able to think of Him. The power to think of the Lord is developed when you are young."

Seated cross-legged on the divan, clothed in his Sannyasin garb, with hands held one within the other on his lap, and with his eyes apparently closed, he might have been a statue in bronze, so immovable was he. A Yogi, indeed ! Awake only to transcendental thought, he was the Ideal, compelling veneration, love and devotion.



## MY IMPRESSIONS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND HIS WORK.

*By Mrs. Annie Besant.*

A striking figure, clad in yellow and orange, shining like the sun of India in the midst of the heavy atmosphere of Chicago, a lion head, piercing eyes, mobile lips, movements swift and abrupt,—such was my first impression of Swami Vivekananda, as I met him in one of the rooms set apart for the use of the delegates to the Parliament of Religions. Monk, they called him, not unwarrantably, but warrior-monk was he, and the first impression was of the warrior rather than of the monk. For he was off the platform, and his figure was instinct with pride of country, pride of race—the representative of the oldest of living religions, surrounded by curious gazers of nearly the youngest, and by no means inclined to give step, as though the hoary faith he embodied was in aught inferior to the noblest there. India was not to be shamed before the hurrying arrogant West by this her envoy and her son. He brought her message, he spoke in her name, and the herald remembered the dignity of the royal land whence he came. Purposeful, virile, strong, he stood out, a man among men, able to hold his own.

On the platform another side came out. The dignity and the inborn sense of worth and power still were there, but all was subdued to the exquisite beauty of the spiritual message which he had brought, to the sublimity of that matchless evangel of the East which is the heart, the life of India, the wondrous teaching of the Self. Enraptured, the huge multitude hung upon his words; not a syllable must be lost! not a cadence missed. “That man a heathen!” said one, as he came out of the great hall; “and we send missionaries to his people! It would be more fitting that they should send missionaries to us.”

The words were prophetic, for many a ‘missionary’ of the Ramakrishna Mission has since trodden in the pathway opened by the great preacher, and the Vedanta has homes in America, in Eastern New York as in Western San Francisco.

The next impression was in smoky London, where Swami Vivekananda was good enough to come to see me, and to say some kindly gracious words on the poor services I was trying to render to his mother-country. The clear keen eyes softened with his gentle smile, and two lovers of India clasped hands in friendship.

Some time later we met again in the far north in the Himalayas.

The splendid strength had weakened, the eyes were tired, the lips had a weary droop. But the Light of the Spirit burned clearly through the body becoming translucent, and we talked peacefully of the great work so loved by us both—the revival of Indian spirituality as a preparation for Indian nationality. We parted, for the last time. The next morning brought a note, asking me to take the chair for the first lecture of his dear disciple, Nivedita, as he was too ill to do it himself—a duty gladly accepted. The disciple I saw again several times, the teacher not. I loved her for her love to India, our adopted mother.

The great Swami's work, his embodiment in the India of to-day, is seen in the noble service rendered by the many centres of the Ramakrishna Mission; for though, in his love for his teacher, Swami Vivekananda gave his teacher's name to the Mission, which with the one hand distributes food to the Spirit and with the other food to the body, it always seemed to me that it is Vivekananda more than Ramakrishna who lives and moves in these youths consecrated to personal service, youths inspired by his example, brave, and strong and true. Well do I remember how a few lads founded the Benares Home; how they raised the sick, the dying, from the streets, carried these into their own poor rooms, washed, fed, nursed, and tended them with sweet and strenuous care. Now it is a large and handsome house, the Benares Home of Service; then it was only dim and poverty-stricken rooms. But surely the spirit of their Teacher inspired the lads, and their work is his best monument.

May God send to India many men, bold, fearless, outspoken, strong to tread the way they see to be right, able to stand alone though ready to stand with others when others are willing to clasp hands. Such was Swami Vivekananda as I knew him—all too little—and reverently I lay on his Samadhi this leaf of grateful memory.



# APPENDIX B.

## IN MEMORIAM : APPRECIATIONS.

Through the kindness of the Sister Nivedita we have been enabled to publish the following extracts from the letters of two distinguished Indians, Dr. J. C. Bose, the great man of science, and the late Mr. Romesh Chandra Dutt, I.C.S., concerning the passing of the Swami. The former wrote from London.—

“What a void this makes ! What great things were accomplished in these few years ! How one man could have done it all ! And how all is stilled now. And yet, when one is tired and weary, it is best that he should rest. I seem to see him just as I saw him in Paris two years ago—the strong man with the large hope, everything large about him.

“I cannot tell you what a great sadness has come. I wish we could see beyond it. Our thoughts are in India with those who are suffering. *July 9th, 1902.*”

*Mr. R. C. Dutt wrote :—*

“ \* \* \* Since then I have heard the sad news of Swami Vivekananda's death. I never saw the Swami, I never closely followed his teachings, but you know how sincerely I appreciated and admired his high patriotism, his genuine belief in the greatness of his country, his manly faith in the future of his countrymen if they are true to themselves. That spirit of self-reliance, that determination to work out our own salvation,—that faith in our country and ourselves,—that conviction that our future rests in our own hands,—are the noblest lessons that we learn from the life of him whose loss we all lament to-day. India is poorer to-day for the untimely loss of an earnest worker who had faith in himself ; to us in Bengal the loss is more of a personal nature ; to you the bereavement is one which will cast a shadow over all your life. Only the thought of his earnestness and greatness, only the imperishable lessons which his life teaches, may afford some consolation to those who have lost in him a friend, a helper in life, a teacher of great truths.”

*Dr. J. C. Bose wrote to Mrs. Ole Bull of Boston, U.S.A.:—*

“It seems to me that nothing is lost and all the great thoughts and work and service and hope remain embodied in and about the place which gave them birth. All our life is but an echo of a few great moments, an echo which reverberates through all time.. .....That great



soul is released ; his heroic deeds on this earth are over. Can we realise what that work has been—how one man did all this ? When one is tired it is best that he should sleep, but his deeds and teachings will walk the earth and waken and strengthen.”—8th July, 1902.

“*A Western Disciple*” wrote in the *Prabuddha Bharata* of July 1902 :—

\*\*\* By the death of Swami Vivekananda, we have lost a dear friend, and suffered an irreparable loss. He is best remembered by us, as having been “the greatest figure in the Parliament of Religions” held at Chicago in 1893, where he addressed crowded audiences, the quality of his teaching and his unaffected eloquence winning a most sympathetic hearing. He had a vivid, eager personality, singularly magnetic, persuasive and enthusiastic. He was no mere visionary anchorite of the Himalayas, giving out the truths of Indian philosophy. On the contrary, he was a man born with perfectly developed spiritual sense, discerning spiritual truths without effort : calm and steadfast, giving forth power from the spiritual centre within, and living for the advancement of his race : a true lover of his fellow-men, devoting his energies in trying to rouse them to their own true selves, content to use up his gifts and talents for their benefit. Clad in his habit of red or ochre, did this Indian Sannyasin standing upon all sorts of platforms, in all manner of places, with a strong beautiful voice expound the philosophy of Vedanta. Again and again in his lectures did he recur to the central idea of Advaita, the One in everything, the potential divinity in all. Gifted with an original outlook upon life, he displayed that fervour and vigour that one associates with monks who have for centuries held to their spirituality with a power and staunchness unrivalled in worldly affairs.

He was widely travelled : he preached Vedanta from New York to Chicago : from Boston to California. Flitting through London, Paris and other cities, he passed through the vain show, as if unconscious of it, except, occasionally to hurl at his listeners a vehement denunciation of the frivolity and lack of spirituality of the times. Speaking of India to Western people, his voice would drop, a wonderful smile would overspread his countenance, as he lovingly related the manners, customs, and characteristics of his beloved countrymen and women. What charming Indian legends and tales he could tell, delighting and entralling the hearts of his hearers, betraying the sympathy and yearning he felt for his race, feeling the pulsation of their hidden life, touching so tenderly on their little idiosyncrasies of temperament and custom !

He has gone from amongst us, he who was instinct with so much inspiration, and who had in him so much of the seed of these later days.

His teachings have become an abiding possession with us and a strength for evermore. Truly can we say with Carlyle—

“We have seen gleams in the face and eyes of the man that have let you look into a higher country.”

The Swami had but scant sympathy with iconoclasts, for as he wisely remarked,—“The true philosopher strives to destroy nothing, but to help all.”

I shall close this humble but heart-felt tribute as I opened it with some more lines from Lowell, the sentiments therein expressed so aptly applying to the tender-hearted character of our late revered teacher.

“As he foresaw how all things false should crumble  
Before the free, uplifted soul of man :  
And when he was made full to overflowing  
With all the loveliness of heaven and earth  
Out rushed his song, like molten iron glowing  
To show God sitting by the humblest hearth  
With calmest courage he was ever ready  
To teach that action was the truth of thought,  
And, with strong arm and purpose firm and steady,  
An anchor for the drifting world he wrought.  
So did he make the meanest man partaker  
Of all his brother-gods unto him gave.”

*Miss S. E. Waldo in the course of a sketch on Swami Vivekananda's Life and Work, writes in "The Anubis", U.S.A.:—*

There recently passed away at Calcutta, India, one of the most remarkable men that the nineteenth century produced. Swami Vivekananda was a well-known figure in England and America, as well as in his native India. He was a man who could shine in any environment, by virtue of his splendid presence, his brilliant conversational powers, his magnetic eloquence and, above all, by his unworldly simplicity and purity of character.....Under his clear eyes, shams and frauds were quickly unveiled, and for religious hypocrisy he had nothing but contempt. He demanded truth and sincerity before all else, and became greatly discouraged in his search, by meeting on all sides with shallow pretence and outward show, in place of earnest sincerity that he was seeking. \* \* \* To know Vivekananda was to like him, and to know him well was to revere him.....

\* \* \* His was a sublime death, a fitting close to the life that had preceded it and one in harmony with the grand philosophy of the Vedanta that he had loved so well and taught so faithfully.

Swami Vivekananda was a man who will be widely missed, and to India his loss will be incalculable. The extent of his work there is far

wider than is generally known, and friends and admirers in all classes of Hindu society will deplore the closing of a life that meant so much.

Not only in India, but in nearly all quarters of the globe are to be found groups of men and women whose lives have been broadened and whose inspirations have been elevated through the ministrations of the noble soul whose departure from its tenement of flesh is a source of deep sorrow to the many who loved him. A great man has left the earth and all the world is poorer in consequence. He lived a noble life and left behind him many mourning hearts.



# APPENDIX C.

## IN MEMORIAM :

### CONTEMPORARY PRESS COMMENTS.

#### THE LONDON LEADER.

There died the other day at Belur—a pleasant, green, jungly sort of a place, a few miles from Calcutta along the river bank—a man who had achieved a more than ordinary reputation in India, and whom the multitudinous devotees of strange faiths in America have delighted to honour.

Occasional echoes may still be heard of the Parliament of Religions at the great Chicago Exposition in 1893—an assembly designed, with the superb optimism of States. The Parliament of Religions melted away, leaving, it is surmised, a single vivid memory with those who listened to its prelections. That was of an apostle from Hindoosthan, a young man, exquisitely dressed and groomed, with smooth, rounded face, a glorious robe, impressive turban, a voice in which his captivated auditors heard all the wonder and depth, all the solace and solemnity and passion of the pristine faith of India.

By the side of this dazzling apparition the ambassadors of all other religions paled into cheerless insignificance. The Chicago assembly was carried away by the messenger from the East. He traversed the States, followed everywhere by eager disciples. He unfolded the inwardness of the Yoga, spoke of the universal soul, of freedom from the toils of the flesh, of the liberation of the soul—that is, the divinity within—by the pursuit of perfection according to the methods of those who in the dim dawn of things on the highlands of Northern India had followed the way.

Men and women, with souls desiccated by doubt and by the formulas of a faith which, for one reason or another, had ceased to have a meaning for them, heard gladly the gospel that came in such undeniably picturesque and distinguished garb. They subscribed money to the apostle's philanthropic schemes. The apostle himself they followed and feted in the incomparable trans-Atlantic fashion. \* \* \*

Then he came to Chicago with the result we have seen. To the impressionable American audiences he appeared as the revealer of the

hidden spiritual treasures of the East. Vivekananda returned to India after a few years of lecturing in the West, and India gave him a triumphant welcome. In Bombay, in Madras, in Calcutta the people turned out to greet the man who had interpreted their ancient customs to the nations of the West. There were processions and triumphal arches, music and acclamations; the country rang with the Yogi's praises, the native press was full of his movements and addresses.....

## BENGAL

### THE BENGALÉE (*Calcutta*).

It is with the deepest regret we learn that Swami Vivekananda is no more. The orange monk of Chicago fame, the loving and beloved disciple of Ramakrishna, the great apostle of neo-Hinduism, has finished his earthly labours and has been gathered by the side of the Lord, whose glory and love he had proclaimed on a hundred platforms, and whose banner he had unfurled even in foreign lands. His was a striking personality and his services to the cause of the national religion were immense. If the wave of modern Hindu revival had emanated from his illustrious and revered preceptor, he, by his life and conduct, had continued the glorious work begun by the latter. If Hinduism to-day counts among its votaries many European and American ladies and gentlemen, if the ancient religion of India has risen in the estimation of Europeans and Americans, the late lamented Swami must mainly have the credit for the happy and much-desired consummation. The Swami's death was truly saintly.....With his countrymen, we regret his death and desire to console his disconsolate friends and followers with the well-known saying, "The good die first."—*6th July, 1902.*

\* \* \* Of his (Sri Ramakrishna's) disciples, the late Swami Vivekananda was the ablest. Gifted with eloquence of a somewhat rude but most impressive order and with a dauntless spirit, the young Bengalee preacher, at first unhonoured in his own country, proceeded to the Far West and began, beyond the Atlantic, a proselytising campaign which was destined to make no little stir in the New World. His striking personality, his saffron garb, his prodigious turban, surmounting a massive and intellectual forehead, his resounding voice and his fluent tongue—all these conspired to make his mission successful beyond the most sanguine expectations. His discourses on Hindu philosophy and the Yoga System opened up undreamt-of fields of speculation before his American audiences and enabled him to make converts, and wealthy

ones too, among persons of both sexes. Encouraged with success, he shifted his camp from America to England, but found John Bull far less impressionable than cousin Jonathan and his womankind. America was the arena of his greatest triumphs.....He had every claim to the gratitude of his countrymen for making the Hindu name respected abroad. And now that he is gone to where beyond these voices there is peace, all will admit that the exit of the well-graced actor has been as dramatic as has been his performance on the Stage.—*July 8, 1902.*

\* \* \* The members of the Ramakrishna Mission are fired with something of the zeal and devotion of a Damien, and by their life of self-sacrifice they shed lustre upon their order and their country.....

### NEW INDA (*Calcutta*).

The news of the sudden death of Swami Vivekananda, at the early age of 39, has been received with profound regret by the Indian public, and will cause considerable grief among the large circle of his acquaintances and admirers in England and America. Endowed with large powers, and a supremely magnetic personality, Vivekananda excited the wonder and admiration of large multitudes wherever he went..... The great inspiration of his life came from Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and in his intimate association with the life and teachings of this great Hindu Saint, lay the real secret of Vivekananda's unique popularity with his own countrymen. This popularity, however, would not have been one hundredth part as great and wide as it was, if Vivekananda had not produced the sensation he did in America, where, however, he did also solid pioneering work, in creating interest in Indian life and thought among large numbers of people, who had been brought up to look down upon both as little removed from primitive culture.....Vivekananda possessed the power of transmitting enthusiasm to the multitude, in an uncommon degree.....As an orator he had, perhaps, no superior among us, after Keshub Chandra Sen,—the greatest preacher we believe of the last century not only in India, but all the world over....The Swami's name will not be soon forgotten by his countrymen; and his memory will be held in honour as of one who sought to raise them in the estimation of civilised humanity, and thus awakened to some extent that national self-consciousness in them, without which no people can realise its God-given destiny.—*10th July, 1902.*

### THE INDIAN NATION (*Calcutta*).

As we go to press we receive the distressing news that Swami Vivekananda is no more. Ramakrishna made no formal *chelas* or disciples. He was never willing to accept the responsibilities of a Guru. But he had a great affection for the young man who came to be afterwards known as Swami Vivekananda. The Saint early saw the spiritual potentialities of the ingenuous youth, and his anticipations were realised. Vivekananda more quickly assimilated and was more deeply inspired by the teaching of the seer whom he accepted as Master and exemplar, than almost anybody else. He gave formal and systematic expression to that teaching in Bengalee and English and propagated it far and wide. His work was done. Loved of the gods he died early, but his was a crowded hour of glorious life. Released from the turmoil of this world, let him rest in the blessed company of his Master and inspire the fellow-workers he leaves behind.—*July 7, 1902.*

\*\*\* We are surprised at the recklessness with which the statement has been made that Swami Vivekananda preached the doctrine, "that only by taking to animal food can the Hindu people work out their salvation among the nations of the world." We take it to be a grievous wrong done to his memory. For his views on the subject of animal food we may refer, among other things, to his lecture on Practical Vedanta. (See "Complete Works," page 398) \*\*\*

Apart from any such question as that of eating animal food, to suppose that Vivekananda looked upon "salvation among the nations of the world" as an ideal is to wholly mis-read his teaching. "Salvation among the nations of the world" would be unmeaning in his philosophy. A man or a nation could attain salvation only in the sense of being saved from sin or unrighteousness. The phrase has a meaning only to the worldly. To them success in the struggle of life is the highest ideal, and success is the realisation of worldly desires. That ideal Vivekananda never held up, and therefore he prescribed no means for attaining it.—*July 14, 1902.*

### THE ENGLISHMAN (*Calcutta*)

A very remarkable religious reformer passed away at Howrah on Friday evening. Swami Vivekananda first came into public prominence nearly fifteen years ago as the champion of orthodox Hinduism. His eloquence combined with a strange personal magnetism, attracted enormous crowds to the public lectures he delivered in the large towns of Upper India. In this country it generally happens that a religious

lecturer has to meet and answer in public the objections of people who think and believe other than he does, and it was thus that the Swami was brought into contact with the foremost living Hindu and Buddhist philosophers at places like Benares and Lahore. He stated that Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism were but manifestations of the one revelation. The last eight or nine years of his life were spent in preaching the essential oneness of the three systems of philosophy. The philosophy he preached was in many respects so attractive that he was able to make converts not only among his own people, but among Europeans. He visited America as the recognised representative of an enormous community of Hindus and his eloquence not only ensured him a hearing, but won him some very fervent disciples. There are indications that his system of religious philosophy will not disappear with his death. He was not without his calumniators, but no man ever set a better example in the way of plain living and high thinking. He was big and burly in appearance, very different from the ordinary conception of an Eastern philosopher, and his movements and actions recalled rather the warrior than the priest. \* \* \*—*July 7, 1902.*

### THE MOHABODHI JOURNAL (*Calcutta*).

A veritable Prince among men has passed away. Swami Vivekananda, the foremost Hindu Missionary of the modern times, the most popular representative at the Parliament of Religions, the favourite "Orange Monk of Chicago," breathed his last on Friday evening at the Belur Math. It is hard to enumerate his services to-day. Suffice it to say that he will be ever remembered by his countrymen as a foremost patriot capable in every way of the work of raising India in the estimation of Europe and America. His powerful exposition of Hindu Religion has marked an epoch in the history of the religious movements of modern India. His writings and utterances, almost inspired, breathed a true catholic spirit and gave a new turn to the religious thought of India, and they will ever remain as a storehouse of spiritual truths. The great disciple of a great Master, he showed in his person what an Indian was capable of. Possessed of a noble and feeling heart, he silently worked towards the amelioration of the condition of the poor and the distressed. In him, India has lost one of her gifted sons and ablest expositors of her ancient religion. \* \* \*—*July, 1902.*



### THE BRAHMACHARIN (*Jessore*).

Swami Vivekananda was the greatest Hindu of modern India. He loved India, as no other Indian did, and made her name respected throughout the world. His countrymen can never forget the service he did to the cause of their religion and philosophy at the Chicago Parliament of Religions. Young in years, he was old in wisdom. His piety and self-sacrifice would serve as bright examples to his countrymen. No one that has not come in contact with him, can form any idea of his strong personality, before which even crowned heads would not hesitate to bow down. He was truly a prince amongst men.

• \* • Swami Vivekananda revived the Sannyas of Buddha and Sankara, who considered their individual salvation as of no importance whatever compared with the good of humanity. If Swami Vivekananda gave up the world and all its good things, it was not for retiring into the forest and living a life of meditation only, but for doing active good to his fellowmen, free as he was from the trammels of a family life.

If renunciation is the test of greatness, Swami Vivekananda was a truly great man. His ideal was ancient India, India of the Rishis, who made India the teacher of all nations. The young graduate of Calcutta cut himself off from his associations of Western culture and civilisation, and fell at the feet of a poor Brâhman, who had no education of the sort which can be had from our schools and colleges; not because he depreciated Western culture, but because he believed that the genius of the East had a sphere of its own. It was his idea that the Hindus were destined to fulfil the function of the priest and teacher to other nations and that if the nations of the world could be divided into four divisions, according to their tendencies, then the Hindus were the Brâhmins. He has sown the seed, and we have no doubt it will germinate and grow into a goodly tree, if the workers he has left behind him make the best use of their opportunities, and work as unselfishly for the cause of the country, as he himself did. The function of a Sannyâsin, a teacher, is man-making, and Swami Vivekananda was eminently successful in drawing his disciples from the various races of India, who, as well as his European and American disciples, are as devoted to the cause of India's religion and philosophy as was their Master, and who will no doubt carry on the work, which he had begun but could not finish. Vivekananda though young worked hard for the country, and he deserved rest, and rest he has got. The mission of his life has been fulfilled, and the prophecy of his Guru Sri Ramakrishna verified.

Swami Vivekananda was a Vedantist, but his Vedantism was of a practical sort. He did not like his countrymen to be dreamy philosophers, but strong practical men with love for God and man.....—*July, 1902.*

THE INDIAN MIRROR (*Calcutta*).

We deeply regret to announce the death of the Swami Vivekananda, the head of the Ramakrishna Mission.....In him a star of great magnitude has disappeared from the Indian firmament. His work in America was of inestimable value both to that country and to this..... Lately, the area of the Ramakrishna Mission work in America has widened so much that Swami Vivekananda was called upon by his colleagues in that country to send ten more Hindu preachers there to supplement the labours of Swami Abhedananda and Swami Turiyananda. The Ramakrishna Mission has been doing good work in India quietly and unostentatiously for some years. \*\*\*—*6th July, 1902.*

To us the death of the Swami Vivekananda has not been in the nature of a surprise, for we know that the prolonged conflict between a towering spirit and a physical frame shattered by various earthly ills, could not last long. It is, however, a wonder that the conflict did last as long as it did. The moment the Swami returned from his glorious and wonderful religious campaign in America, death had marked him for its own. But it was the undaunted Spirit that burned within, that continued to qualify him as it did—since the Swami was a mere lad—"to scorn delights and to live laborious days." We, comparative non-entities, are easily put out by a slight mortification ; little troubles place us a-bed ; common disappointments swell as large as the Martinique Volcano ; but the late Swami's whole life was a living lesson against such unmanly despondency.....To-day when the star has set, we, Bengalis, mourn our utter loss. This, in brief, is the vanity of things. But still, it is a record of human effort which is not likely to be forgotten many a long year. Had Swami Vivekananda been less than he was, the world, especially India, would have been much poorer. But the Swami's Karma was great. He believed in the past of his country ; he revered India's ancient teachers ; he possessed supreme faith in his national religion ; and truly great man that he was, he believed implicitly in himself. That was the secret of the Swami's astonishing success.....Swami Vivekananda's inspirer was Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. And that one ideal of a visibly realised life, in act and conduct, lifted the devout worshipper to still loftier ideals, till the mere clay-man was absorbed in the Pure, Eternal, Undividable, Supreme, Universal Spirit.

Of Swami Vivekananda's many-sided beneficent activity in India and abroad, we shall have to speak again and again .....It has been a matter of surprise to our friends as well as to strangers, that we should have taken the Swami by the hand at all. We have been known as being rather "bigoted" followers of the Theosophical cult. But, bigoted or otherwise, we have never lost sight of the truth that God works His

goodness and purpose in infinite ways.....And taking Swami Vivekananda into His bosom, we are confident that His welcome will be—"Servant of God, well done!"

\* \* \* Had the late lamented Swami Vivekananda done nothing more than attend the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, and deliver that one speech which brought India and America together in juxtaposition almost immediately, he would still have been entitled to our fullest gratitude. That speech compelled attention both in method and substance. It was the first time that an American audience had listened to an accredited Hindu missionary—to a man who enjoyed in a very large measure the advantages of knowledge and of speech, and of personal magnetism. It may be said of that first impression, and that first interchange of thought in the higher plane of metaphysics, that Swami Vivekananda "went, saw, and conquered."

To return to the worth and work of Swami Vivekananda. It is even impossible to belittle them in any sense, or before any intelligent jury of human beings. As a matter of fact, even prejudiced and naturally antagonistic Hindu or Christian journals have paid every respect to the Swami's memory. We have seldom seen such a consensus of opinion about a dead worthy's merits. The Swami brought the East and West together as no other man did for a long, long time. A sojourn of scarcely three years in America—a roving preacher all that while—but he is unforgetten, and will not be forgotten.....To-day Vedantism is understood by a large number of the American people. What an achievement! What a consummation! Therefore, we repeat that had Swami Vivekananda done nothing more than attend the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, done nothing more than make that one soul-stirring and spirit-moving speech, still he would be entitled to the fullest reverence and gratitude of the entire Hindu race.—*8th July, 1902.*

There is yet another aspect of the surpassing usefulness of the late Swami's closing years.....When the Swami ceased to be a public speaker.....he was absorbed in the work of silent but practical philanthropy. In that work,.....his American believers and admirers did take a very considerable and very practical share. Disease and pain and discouragement notwithstanding, Swami Vivekananda, with the help of the faith which he had in himself, and with the help of the faith which his friends had in him, established Maths and Ashrams in different localities in Bengal and upper India. He created asylums for Hindu orphans—the waifs and strays left to the world's charity by two successive famines. These institutions still exist and flourish, and as to their excellence and self-sustaining power, everyone who knows anything about them has borne eloquent and repeated testimony. The Swami also founded or helped to found, two religio-philosophical Magazines—one in Madras

and the other at Mayavati in Almora. These literary ventures have proved successful, and stimulated much research in the field of Vedantic religious thought among the Hindus. Swami Vivekananda made many friends in the West, and acquired some few disciples, and among the latter there is none more learned and loyal, and eloquent and self-sacrificing than that charming English lady, Miss Margaret Noble, who has become a Sannyasin, and prefers to be known by the name of Sister Nivedita. With this Sister's help, Swami Vivekananda achieved remarkable success in the work of social reform among the Bengali-Hindu community in Calcutta. They at no time claimed infallibility or perfection for their speech, or thought, or methods of work. They did not strive for effect. They lived in a poor locality, in a poor home, facing disease and death itself in their local surroundings, but ever stimulating by life, voice and example earnest effort in others to alleviate the social misery which all around them was only too much in evidence. To refer to only one thing among many, Swami Vivekananda saw and wept for the abundant plague misery of Calcutta..... The followers of Swami Vivekananda "wept tears bitter as blood" at the sight of the plague devastation and destruction. Those were no "idle tears." From those tears flowed the streams of Rescue and Charity. We remember, with admiration and gratitude, the work of rescue and succour undertaken and accomplished by the members of the Ramakrishna Mission—we remember how they penetrated into the filthiest *bastis* full of moral and material filth, how they consoled the plague-stricken population; how they helped to cleanse the moral and material plague-spots, and how they won love and gratitude everywhere. This altruistic work has a permanent record in the city's annals.—*10th July, 1902.*

Such was the man whom India needed most at this hour of her trial to work out her ultimate destiny under the British rule. He was not a talker but a man of action. The number of such men among us is limited and if the youth of India for whose welfare the Swami has so often expressed his deep solicitude, have any desire to benefit themselves and their country, they cannot do better than make him their model,

THE STATESMAN (*Calcutta*).

There passed away at Belur on Friday evening, as already announced in these columns, one of the notable figures of the neo-Hindu movement. The Swami Vivekananda was, in his way, a remarkable man, and, as his history shows, a personality of considerable attraction. The most prominent disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, he had a large following in Bengal and Madras, and many people in Calcutta will remember the fervour of the reception accorded to him on his return from the West. It was on the other side of the world that Swami Vivekananda achieved his triumphs. At the memorable Parliament of Religions in Chicago, his superb appearance and the fascination of his speech swept the great assembly off its feet. In England, also, he was admired by numbers of more or less thoughtful people who, for all kinds of reasons, had ceased to find satisfaction in the religion of their fathers. The explorer of the byways of heterodoxy in London, some six or seven years ago, might occasionally have found himself crossing the quiet and withdrawn paths of the Swami. Wealthy ladies took him up. He made a surpassingly effective ornament to their drawing-rooms, with his saffron robe, his splendid turban, his full impassive face and level mellifluous speech. In dim Belgravian rooms, on cool summer evenings, he was to be heard addressing a little company of devotees, mostly women, in whose eyes this Seer from the immemorial East was clothed in light. They drank of the waters of healing that he seemed to draw from the wells of the Vedanta philosophy. Fluently, impressively, with unvarying solemnity, he delivered his message: that the goal of all the Indian religions is one, the liberation of the soul through perfection: that every soul is potentially divine: that the aim of the soul is to be free, and to manifest the divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal; that this is to be done by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, — by one, or more, or all of these; and that herein is the whole of Religion. To minds that had lost anchorage in evangelical Protestantism and were wandering in mazes of doubt and disillusion, seeking by any means that offered to untie the master-knot of human fate, the Swami's message from the remote East and the remoter past seemed to furnish a clue at least worth following for a little way. Many of his English and American followers contributed to his philanthropic schemes; a few entrusted him with very considerable sums of money. There can be no question that the increased interest in the ancient thought and creeds of India, which is so noticeable a feature in Western life to-day, is largely due to the influence of Swami Vivekananda, but it may be remarked that his own methods of exposition owed at least as much to the thinkers of modern Europe as to the sages of ancient India.—*July 9th, 1902.*

## BOMBAY.

### THE NATIVE OPINION (*Bombay*).

We are extremely sorry to announce the death of Swami Vivekananda, the most enthusiastic and earnest champion of Vedantism. The labours of Swami Vivekananda in the field of Hindu religious reform are certainly admirable and his death will be mourned by all. His child-like simplicity, suavity of manners, willingness to confess his own faults and mistakes,—all these virtues have endeared him to many sons of India, whether orthodox or reformer. The European missionaries had totally misrepresented Hindu religion in Europe and America, and the Swami's refutations were admitted to be sound and logical. It need hardly be said that the arguments of the Christian missionaries never stand the test of sound reasoning, and when they are likely to be defeated they malign advocates of other religions, and by that method attempt to convince the world that Christianity stands uppermost in every respect. Swami Vivekananda had to confront such persons and encounter difficulties of a complicated nature in carrying conviction to sensible men that Hinduism was the purest of all religions. The Swami explained the Hindu Yoga philosophy to the American public and earned an everlasting name as a fair critic and a profound philosopher. That asceticism is essential to the study of Yoga was the conviction of many, but he assured them that for Raja Yoga asceticism was not necessary. He was held in high estimation in every part of the country for pioneering a noble and a true cause. He was much deified in Bengal in spite of the efforts of some mischief-mongers to throw cold water over his admirable exertions. May his soul rest in peace !—*July 9, 1902.*

### EAST AND WEST (*Bombay*).

The eloquent representative of Hinduism who took the Parliament of Religions at Chicago by storm, is no more. His open, prepossessing countenance, his majestic bearing, and his orange-coloured robe might have contributed in some measure to heighten the effect of his eloquence, but what struck his hearers most was the universality of his creed, the absence from it of that theological exclusiveness which is generally associated with the religions which seek to assert their superiority over others. \*\*\*—*July, 1902.*

THE GAJARATI (*Bombay*).

Swami Vivekananda is no more. Like a meteor he suddenly appeared on the horizon full of brilliance and glory and in a short time vanished into infinite space. It was the dearest wish of many of those who had watched his career and studied his luminous expositions of Indian philosophy to introduce him one day to the public of this Presidency in general and of this great city in particular. But owing to one reason or another that wish remained unfulfilled and the gifted and brilliant Vedantin has been lost to us for ever... The Swamiji had not only intimate knowledge of his speciality, but he was also endowed with a great personal charm, a musical voice, and a most fascinating eloquence. He literally carried Chicago by storm. His luminous exposition, his irresistible eloquence, the sublimity and grandeur of the philosophy he propounded with so much knowledge and skill, his simplicity and complete renunciation of the world—all these made a profound impression upon the learned expositors of the various creeds and religions of the world that had gathered there and upon the mind of the vast audience that had come to hear them. It was little believed that the diffident Hindu Sannyasin was going to win the heart of the whole audience by his beautiful expositions and to prove to the American world that the Indian Vedanta contained so much that was profound, so much that was sublime, and so much that transcended by far the ideals of the religious reformers and philosophers of the West. But this grand and unequalled feat was achieved by the gifted and favourite pupil of Sri Paramahansa Ramakrishna.....

On his return from America he received unparalleled and enthusiastic ovations at Madras. They afforded him a fresh inspiration and it was there that he delivered some of his masterly speeches on the duties and responsibilities of India, on Eastern and Western ideals and Vedantic philosophy. His remarkable eloquence and fascinating power of exposition constrained our contemporary of the *Hindu* to say that never within the memory of the oldest inhabitant had an orator of his brilliance been heard in Madras..... His work on Raja Yoga shows with what happy skill, ease and grace he could wield the English language in dealing with an abstruse subject. It is difficult to do justice to his views and doctrines within the short space of a column or two. But it is perfectly clear that he was no orthodox preacher in the sense most of our countrymen are. He was not a Brâhman and was less fettered in his movements than Brâhman preachers. He had not their prejudices or predilections. But in one direction at least he was all for reform. He wanted his countrymen to go out, travel in foreign countries and effect spiritual conquests all the world over, because he was

thoroughly convinced that the gift of India to the world was destined to be the gift of religion and philosophy. He longed to bring about the revival of India through the spiritual revival of the people. He was not for the supremacy of the Brāhmins merely on grounds of caste. But he was not for dethroning them. His solution of the caste problem was the elevation of the lower classes to the level of the Brāhmins, and he at the same time impressed upon the latter the sacred duty of lifting up the former by making them appropriate the culture and knowledge of the higher classes whom he wished to stick to their ideals. As a true *Vedantin* and *Sannyasin* it was impossible that he should stand up for gross superstitions and blighting social and religious customs. His own life is a standing protest against any such ideas. Some of our modern reformers fail to make any impression upon the people even as preachers, because they lack the necessary knowledge of Indian religion and philosophy. Here Swami Vivekananda was quite at home. Besides, his life as a *Sannyasin* was always in his favour wherever he went. He has made many converts in America and has established Maths near Almora, on the river Hoogly and in Southern India for his followers. But the great and gifted Master is gone for ever. Let us hope the spirit of his teachings will continue to animate his sorrowing pupils. To India he has done invaluable service by showing to the Western nations what she is capable of achieving in the higher spheres of religion and philosophy. He rose like a resplendent star and has set with all his effulgence. His death is a heavy loss to the country, to the Indian reformer as well as to the orthodox community, and will be deeply mourned even in America where he was so widely known.—*July 20th, 1902.*

\*\*\* The Indian Social and Religious reformer will also do well to bear in mind that one of the secrets of the Swami's success was that he was no mere platform reformer but that his life and character extorted respect from all the sections of Hindu community. \*\*\*

### THE MAHRATTA (*Poona*).

\*\*\* For it is surely the Swamiji's choice of the ideal of a spiritual as opposed to a material life, his successful attempt to wear Ramakrishna's mantle and to deserve it, and his great renunciation are the three keynotes of his short and sweet life. There is perhaps one more idea which has been carried out by Swami Vivekananda, though it does not appear to have formed the subject of any of his Guru's sayings; and it is that a sage should use patriotism as a fulcrum for the operation of his spiritual power and *tapas*. It is this last, perhaps, which made



the difference between the practical aspects of the life of the great sage and his illustrious disciple ; for whereas Sri Ramakrishna personally realised supreme bliss in a spiritual trance, Swami Vivekananda realised it in superinducing something like a trance of enchantment upon his fellow-countrymen, by the magic of eloquent preaching with a view to rouse them into patriotic action. In Swami Vivekananda, therefore, we lose a patriot-sage who deserves the foremost rank among the national workers of the present age. \* \* \*

It is now well-known how successful was the Swami's performance on the platform of the Parliament of the world's religions at Chicago. His appearance there was the bursting of the Vedantic bomb-shell among the mob of Christian sects and the charm of his personal magnetism proved so potent, that even his opponents could not help liking him.....Encouraged by his reception, Swami Vivekananda found it easy to carry out his plan of establishing a school for teaching Vedanta to the Americans, and the fruits of persistent teaching for two years were to be seen in the many converts to Hinduism that he made in the ranks of Christian ladies and gentlemen.....

As regards the Swami's creed, it is well known that he was a Vedantin. He preached *Advaita*; but he was not a bigoted *Advaitin*; for he regarded that both the *Dvaita* and the *Advaita* schools had their own use.....He regarded Vedanta from the practical point of view, and though himself a follower of Shankaracharya, he did not hesitate to prefer Ramanuja, in certain respects.....He himself was for popularising religious knowledge and worship.....He did not want, however, to degrade or depreciate Sanskrit, for Sanskrit was to him equivalent to 'Prestige.' His idea to bring spiritual knowledge in the forum also did not originate in his hate for the Brâhman. Far from it. He did not want to bring down the Brâhmans, but to raise the non-Brâhmans up. His solution of the caste problem was "to bring about the *levelling ideas* of caste by making the other castes appropriate the culture and education which is the strength of the highest caste.....As to the means of improving the condition of the people and creating a spirit of nationality in India, he held well-defined views; and spiritual enthusiast that he was, he looked at everything through religion.....

But he was not content with preaching the cause of spiritualism in India. It was his ambition to carry his mission to distant lands, and in this respect he excelled the greatest Bengalee reformer—we mean, Raja Ram Mohan Roy. He felt inspired by a noble ambition of retaliating upon those who had so long taken the aggressive and encroached upon the domain of Hinduism.....Our foreign policy, however, can be for the present only spiritual and not political. Our policy must be to go abroad and preach the truths of our Shastras to the nations of the

world... The Indians are a conquered people, yet they have their own conquests to make.....He bitterly felt that India had completely degenerated ; and his idea of curing her was to make her recognise that in spiritualism lay her strength and what was wanted was only faith in herself. The difference between the Englishman and the Indian he explained by saying that the Englishman believed in himself, whereas the Indian did not.....That his diagnosis of the disease was correct he amply proved by his own action and example. For it is due to him that the seeds of Vedantism have been sown in the American soil and the name of India is being respected in that distant land.

The few selections, that we have given above at random from his several speeches, will at once show the great breadth of the Swami's views and the intense spiritual patriotism that he felt. Can the death of such a man be regarded as anything less than a national calamity? We really doubt whether the last century produced another man within whom such true patriotism was combined with such religious fervour. Bengal produced Ram Mohan Roy and Keshub Chandra Sen, who in their own way attempted to introduce the light of the East into the West..... But none of them succeeded so well as the Swami in pushing the campaign of aggressive Vedantism into the hearts of the Europeans and the Americans. Possibly the Swami came on the scene when the ground was better prepared for him by rationalising scientists who have rudely shaken Christian belief, but possibly also the Swami possessed that dash and that intense love for Hinduism, which both Ram Mohan Roy and Keshub Chandra Sen lacked.....None of them succeeded in getting a hold over the popular mind : and though they won admiration from Europeans, they could not make Hinduism as much respected as it is to-day owing to the efforts of Swami Vivekananda.

The Swami's career has been brief, and like a meteor of the first magnitude, he lighted up the face of his country and went down the horizon—all within ten short years. It is men like him that our country needs most at the present time ; and though he is gone, the glory of his example will, we trust, remain long behind him.—*July 13th, 1902.*

### THE SHREE SAYAJI VIJAYA.

\* \* \* We have said enough, on what India had lost in Swami Vivekananda's death, and we are sure we have voiced the feelings of millions of our countrymen. In the latter part of the bygone century there were two epoch-making Indians in India, of whom any people might be proud, two who passed away on the threshold of this ill-begun century, —Ranade and Vivekananda.....Mr. Setlur, a well-known Advocate of

Bombay, has timely voiced the cry of duty and reverence in the *Times of India*. His information will convince new men and confirm old men alike in the view they might have about the activity of Vivekananda that he was essentially a national personage.....The *Times of India* bore testimony to the endeavours and good results of the great Swami the other day.....We hope now at least the Bombay, Baroda, and Gujrath public will show a proper sense of awakening to and consciousness of the needful tribute to the memory of one who was one among all these hundreds of millions.—*2nd August, 1902.*

## MADRAS.

### THE INDIAN REVIEW (*Madras*).

A glorious light is extinguished and a terrible gloom has been cast over the land. The brightest star that for ten years and more proclaimed in all its splendour and grandeur the glory of God and the divinity of man, has vanished from mortal view. He that came of the Lord has gone unto the Lord. The noble soul that early in life cast off all that mortal man holds near and dear, donned the simple yellow robe of the ascetic, took the beggar's bowl in hand and wandered from one corner of the country to another, aye, crossed the distant seas to proclaim the glory of the Vedanta, is no more. We shall no longer see his majestic figure, nor hear his magnetic eloquence that kept under a spell all those that came under its influence.....It is impossible to adequately give expression to the feelings of genuine and profound sorrow which the news of the premature demise of this great Sannyasin has caused throughout the land and the sorrow with which the sad tidings will be received in America, the land where he built his world-wide fame. It is equally impossible within the short space of a note, written hastily under the influence of great sorrow, even to describe in brief the glory of his mission and the greatness of his achievements. To that we shall have to refer often in the future. For the present we content ourselves with answering the question, what is the reason of the extraordinary sorrow which his death has called forth? To say that he pandered to the vulgar patriotism of the people by speaking of the glory of the past would be a cruel lie. No, on the other hand, there was no more scathing critic of the present degeneracy of the Hindus than Swami Vivekananda. Those that have not had the fortune of listening to his many private discourses have simply to read his many lectures, and in particular the one on the Vedanta delivered at Lahore on the 12th November, 1897. Therein they will find the Swami's sledge-hammer blows on the excrescences

that have crept into our religion and life. The secret of his success lay in his sincere but enlightened love for the land of his birth and the religion of his Rishis. His religion knew no caste, no colour; his philosophy knew no systems and sophistries; his sympathy was boundless, and he recognised a brother and sister in every man and woman he met. With the same breath and the same spirit he praised the glory of the Brahman of the Hindus, the Ahura Mazda of the Zoroastrians, the Buddha of the Buddhists, the Jehova of the Jews and the Father in Heaven of the Christians. He despised no religion, no form of worship. ....If often he laid stress on the glory of the Vedanta, it was because he felt that in ideal it proclaimed the great lesson which he incessantly voiced forth,—the lesson of the harmony of all religions.....The death of such a man leaves a void that will long remain unfilled. This is the great misfortune of India at present. Worthy and capable leaders are few and far between, and when they go, they leave no successors to carry on their work. Swami Vivekananda, however, was a teacher of rare personal charm and power. May we hope that his blessed mantle has descended on some worthy pupil of his?—*July, 1902.*

### THE MYSORE HERALD.

Swami Vivekananda, the foremost of the spiritual sons of India,..... He was a great master of Hindu religion and philosophy. He contributed more than anybody else to shed a spiritual lustre around the Vedanta Philosophy of India among the Westerns. By his death the philosophy and religion of India have sustained a loss which it is very difficult to make good. We may have masters of Hindu religion and philosophy equal and even superior to Swami Vivekananda but we have yet to find one who has combined such mastery of the English language with such attainments in Hindu philosophy. It is however a consolation that in so short an age he has done so much to raise the name and fame of his fatherland in the Western world.—*July 14th, 1902.*

### THE NATIVE STATES. (*Madras*)

A strong and sublime personality closed his earthly career.....The Swami built for himself a world-wide reputation when he was about thirty as a masterly exponent of the Vedanta in the Parliament of Religions of 1893. Since his return in 1897 to India he was engaged, in spite of indifferent health, in a strenuous effort to found the Ramakrishna Mission on an enduring basis. But his friends were always

deeply concerned in the failing health of the apparently strong, stalwart-looking, beloved teacher of theirs. And now that the dreaded event has come to pass, to mourn and suffer seems to be the lot of India. Her choicest sons are snatched away before her expectations are realised. Her greatest men too early become mere names,—a thing of memory. Is it wrong then to hope? No; disappointments and sorrows are the steps that lead us to our goal. It is thus that we must receive the news of the death of the Swami Vivekananda. He is dead. He has joined the ranks of those who live to us only in their works. It is too early now to form any idea as to the extent of the Swami's influence over the present generation, and through this generation on the future. The grandest and most enduring work that he did according to our view is the teaching of the gospel of strength and love. His lectures, although a noble commentary and exposition of the great Vedanta Philosophy, insisted with splendid force and reiteration on its practical side. From being an abstract speculation to many, it has through the Swami's teaching, become an intensely practical guide in our life.....Thus the essence of all Swami's work is the gospel of strength and love. "Be strong; free yourself from weakness, extend your love to all," was his feeling and favourite commentary on the Vedanta.....All through his writings and his utterances, occur numberless passages like the above which, removed from their setting, lose all their potency. The lips that sounded the bugle call and uttered these inspiring words of strength, of love and of hope are now silent for ever, and all that remains of him now is dearer to the country.....Surely a noble religion expounded by a noble patriot! But the zeal of the reformer in him did not blind him to the uses of the forces with which he was not immediately concerned. ....Such was the man whose premature death has cast a gloom on India and left it poorer by one strong and sterling patriot who braced himself for a life of sacrifice and duty by drinking deep of the ancient founts of inspiration.—*July 13th, 1902.*

### THE HINDU (*Madras*).

The news that Swami Vivekananda breathed his last, has come upon us with a shock. Although it was known for a year or two that the heavy and tireless work he did in America and the Western world as an expounder of the ancient Hindu thought had considerably shattered his constitution, still it was believed recently that his health was improving and that he would soon be able to resume his work with his usual energy and enthusiasm. But the will of Divine Providence seems to have ordained otherwise, and now that he is no more, the least that we can do is to appreciate justly the value of the work he did in his life and to

learn for ourselves as well as to arrange to transmit to posterity all those lessons of nobility, self-sacrifice, and enthusiastic patriotism, which have so largely abounded in his career as a cosmopolitan Hindu Sannyasin.....

Swami Vivekananda's great work in life has been to endeavour to make the world realise this threefold character of the teachings contained in the ancient Vedanta of India, to fight against the war of creeds and religions and to make all men, and particularly his own countrymen, realise that the soul of man is fundamentally divine in character, and that the divinity which is so found within each man and woman requires that the life which is lived by him or her should be divine in character and divine in all its motives. Even before he began his public career as a teacher, commencing it by his ringing exposition of Hinduism in the Chicago Parliament of Religions, his earnestness and power were known to almost everyone who had come in contact with him. But it is the Parliament of Religions in Chicago that revealed him even to his mother-country. With that revelation came to him the great scope that he has had to work out the mission of his Master, and when, after his tireless toil in America and England, he returned to India, the reception that Madras gave him was so grand and enthusiastic that we still see the events connected with that reception pictured before our mind's eye. Indeed he deserved such a reception, and as he himself is known to have put it, it all went to the glorification of his Master and of the Indian Vedanta which made his Master great. We feel that we are too near the sorrow that has been caused by the announcement of his death to judge adequately the worth and meaning of his career. There is no doubt that he has tilled a wide area and sown therein seeds of an inestimable value to man. It is in human nature as exhibited in human history to judge the work of the sower in the light of the harvest that is reaped. Now that the sower has sowed the seed and finished his work, the harvest to a great extent depends upon those whose duty it is to water the fields and to tend the young plants : and we have no doubt that there is still force and vitality enough in the ancient civilisation of India to produce the men from time to time who are needed to serve that civilisation in all that constitutes its peculiar essence and claim to divine glory. Swami Vivekananda was a Sannyasin, and the serenely calm death that has come to him at the conclusion of a life of such usefulness and human service, is an event in relation to which nobody has any right to complain. He has done in a most admirable manner the work in life for which he prepared himself and paid his debt to nature. To day we feel proud that India produced him and that her title to honour in the pages of history has been considerably enhanced by him whose memory deserves to be cherished with reverence and love along with that of some of the greatest men known to the annals of humanity,

THE BRAHMAVADIN (*Madras*).

It is with feelings of profound sorrow that we announce the passing away of Swami Vivekananda.....His immortal soul departed in solemn peacefulness to its divine abode of eternal freedom and enduring bliss. The zeal which he displayed while here on earth in behalf of the spiritual elevation of humanity, so as to make men in general and his own countrymen in particular realise the glory and the power of the divinity dwelling within them, cannot but be a guarantee to all those who have had the privilege of feeling the warmth and the glowing intensity of that zeal, that his soul, from its divine abode, will continue to watch with care and help on, in ways that frail man here may not see, the progress of the work of human ennoblement for which he laboured so hard both in the East and in the West. Still the loss sustained by us and, as we may well say, by the world at large in the disappearance of this great personality from the earthly scene of his holy activity is immeasurably great, and appears to us to be almost irreparable. We have been too much within the brilliant halo of his magnetic influence to estimate justly either the great value of the work that he did in our midst or how that work will grow and prosper in the coming years so as to make the march of human civilisation towards its God-appointed goal quicker and surer. *The Brahmavadin* owes its very existence to his inspiration; and whatever it has achieved in the way of spreading the higher thoughts of Hindu philosophy and religion, has been largely due to his continued help and sympathetic guidance. We therefore make no apology to give our readers an account of how his loss has been felt all over this country; and in doing so we wish to draw the attention of every one of them to the truth that there is only one way of worthily honouring the memory of a great man that has been a great worker, and that that one way consists in labouring steadily and strenuously towards the fulfilment of his high aims and aspirations. May God bless the departed Swami's soul with divine blessings, and may He also bestow on us the strength to bear up his loss and to carry on his mission of human elevation and ennoblement in India and elsewhere.—*July, 1902.*

Tradition says that when Kabir Das died, both Hindus and Moham-medans claimed his body. The real secret of it was that he preached and lived a true religious life,—a pure and holy life consecrated by sacrifice. Hindus and Mohammedans joined in worshipping a saint who embodied in himself the essence of all religions. A similar fate seems to await the memory of the Swami Vivekananda. *The Indian Messenger* of Calcutta claims him as a reformer. The Ramakrishna Mission would, we dare say, not dispute this claim. But the pity of it is that *The Indian Messenger* has not seen the nobler aspects of that short but intensely-

lived life. He was a great patriot and teacher of religion. Social Reform was almost an inaudible note in that vast harmony whose keynote was strength and manhood. The present-day social reformers he condemned in no unmistakable terms.....The Swamiji was for man-making radical institutions, whereas the reformer is for patching up the social fabric here and there, just where the foreigner points the finger of scorn, and making the whole fabric look nice in the eye of the world. This is not reform. It is social tailoring. After a day's use the stitches give way. The fabric is all the uglier and weaker for the stitches. It is the strong fibre that makes a good cloth and it is the spirit that maketh the Man. Politics is much better for such restless spirits than Social Reform, that tends to make us a nation. Social Reform exposes our nakedness to a not overfriendly observer. Let us not parade our weakness. No nation is without it.

### THE MALABAR MAIL.

Swami Vivekananda is dead. The prop of Hinduism is fallen. In his quiet hermitage at Howrah, on the 4th of this month, that great leader of Hindu thought and ornament of the religion of the Rishis, bade the last adieu to his country. God's will be done! To this ancient land, the heir of the most glorious past that the world has ever known, and to more than two hundred millions of grateful inhabitants, the great Swami whose premature demise we record to-day, was for the last ten years and more "Like yon orb in Heaven without whom all were darkness." The Hindus were taught by him by both precept and example; their thoughts were shaped and their actions guided by his mighty intellect. The people of India knew, why, for the matter of that, the whole civilised world knew, first to admire and respect and then to love him like a Master and adore him as a God. The world is certainly much poorer by the death of the Swami and the loss that the Hindus have been doomed to sustain to-day, in the untimely demise of the great Bengali Saint is one the like of which has not happened to them at any time in the near past and will not, because it cannot, happen to them at any time in the near future. "Whom the gods love die young." So, in their despair cried the old philosophers of Greece. The gods indeed have loved him but too well and deprived a weeping and woe-begone world of its lovely light and leader. The heart-rending news must have been received throughout the length and breadth of this empire from Cashmere to Comorin and from Karachi to Kachar, as one of the heaviest national calamities that have befallen the Hindus. When we only remember, that even in distant continents like America and Europe and



in the remotest corners of the world, the death of the great Hindu Sannyasin will be looked upon as a direct, distinct and positive loss to the world, which nothing on earth can profess to replace, we must be in a position to realise the worth and magnitude of the work that the Swami was doing in his life. And now that our revered Saint is no more, what alone, we Hindus, who follow the religion that Swami Vivekananda preached, can hope to do, is to study his life and learn from it the many noble lessons of purity and self-sacrifice, which will last like beacon-lights to the end of time for the guidance and correction of erring humanity.

\* \* \* The lectures that he delivered at the Parliament of Religions are some of the masterpieces of the world's religious literature, and many American Christians who had come to scoff at him, remained in the end to pray with him. Not only Chicago, the scene of the Swami's brilliant discourses, but the whole Republic of the United States was galvanised by his thrilling speeches and the great orator and thinker commanded, at times, the largest audiences that could ever be had for lectures on religion. It is due to the Swami's speeches and the classes he held in different parts of America that Hinduism has become an established religion, at least in the Vedantic form, with thousands of men and women in that country. Thence he proceeded to Europe, where, wherever he went, he received a most cheerful and enthusiastic reception. And thus visibly making the whole religious thought and feeling of the right-thinking world gravitate towards Vedanta, full of glory though not of years, Vivekananda came back to India to resume his life-work in the midst of a grateful and roused-up people. Ever since his return, he has been working, immeasurably, and incessantly for the religious revival of the Hindus, and in that one supreme endeavour has not minded his physical comforts and his very health.....He was only about 39 when he breathed his last ; but he has done within that "contracted span" work whose influence will end but with the end of time. This is not the place, nor is this the occasion, to expatiate upon the life-work of the great Saint in detail ; we are too near the soul-harrowing grief to describe it at this moment. God has taken away His Person from us. But his spirit is still with us, and will guide and control us. Hindus are proud to cherish the memory of such a man, and Hindus will love and revere him, as long as they live. Swami Vivekananda was born in a country which produced the authors of the Bhagavadgita and the Vedanta Sutras and will be unhesitatingly ranked with them by the future historians of India. We who live to-day to record this, feel proud that one from among us lived to attain that honour. \* \* \*

### THE SOUTH INDIAN TIMES.

Another distinguished son of India is gone and it is with deep sorrow that we record the death of Swami Vivekananda, the great scholar and preacher of Hindu Vedantic Philosophy.....It was with infinite credit to himself that he mastered the doctrines of innumerable religions so well as to be able to meet their respective missionaries in their own fields and to even successfully maintain the truth, the dignity and the divinity of his own religion, Hinduism. Nothing is so difficult and even impossible as to expect a missionary of one religion to acknowledge some merit in another religion. This however, Swami Vivekananda has achieved in his remarkable career.....The representatives of all creeds and denominations respected his views and even those that disagreed, loved him as a man and as a preacher—so winningly affable and so unoffending in his expressions and manners. Those who had the privilege of hearing his inspiring and spirited lectures in foreign lands—and he had visited many of them—and those who like us in Kumbakonam have listened to his able expositions in his country, will readily credit him with extraordinary powers of eloquence, deep wide knowledge and his philanthropic heart...

We but echo the unmixed sorrow of the Indian people at this calamitous news and we hope that the impressions left in them by his varied discourses will be lasting enough to ennoble their souls. \* \* \*

### THE INDIAN SOCIAL REFORMER.

We have received with much regret the news of the death of the Swami Vivekananda. We were among the small company which gathered at the Triplicane Literary Society ten years ago to meet Swami Vivekananda, then an obscure and unknown wanderer in Southern India. The incidents of the memorable evening will be found recorded in the pages of the *Reformer*.....At the Parliament of Religions, his opportunity came. He became the hero of the hour, and his return was a royal procession from Ramnad to Madras. Addresses poured on him, his carriage was drawn by enthusiastic admirers, and, so far as popularity went it was the supreme moment of the Swami's life.....We had occasion to meet the Swami pretty frequently. He paid a visit to the rooms of the Madras Social Reform Association, and, much to the surprise of some, followed it up by a violent and public attack against "beardless boys" attempting to guide the course of Hindu social progress.....At Calcutta he set himself to founding the Ramakrishna Mission and to direct its work of intense practical philanthropy.....He sent a telegram of cordial good-wishes to the Social Conference held at Lahore.

The whole of this brief but crowded life is so compacted together that it is really difficult to unravel it into its component parts. That the Swami was, from the first, actuated by a single powerful idea, is certain. \* \* \*

Now, what was the ideal of Swami Vivekananda? We have seen it said that it was to establish the greatness of the Vedanta philosophy. To us, however, it seems to have been more a practical than a philosophical end that he had in view. He, no doubt, made a good deal of the Vedanta.....But Vivekananda's real object was to make his countrymen take a more serious view of the present and the future than of the past..... On one point, at any rate, his attitude was unmistakable and that was in regard to caste. The deliberate seeking and acceptance of the personal co-operation of men and women in Europe and America, was an affront to present-day Hinduism of the most aggressive kind. About eating and drinking, the late Swami held more with the doctrine of Christ than with the ceremonial scruples of his own people. The philanthropic work of the Ramakrishna Mission which he founded and controlled till his death, marks it out as a unique organisation in the history of modern India. That alone is enough to raise him high among those who have laboured to infuse new life into the Indian people. It is a matter of melancholy satisfaction to us, who differed so much and so strenuously from the deceased Swami at one period of his remarkable life, to bear testimony, at his death which we sincerely deplore, to the greatness of his ideal, the magnetism of his personality, and the depth of his patriotism. India is poorer for the loss of Swami Vivekananda.—*13th July, 1902.*

\* \* \* There never was a more fiery patriot than he in all India. \* \* \*

### THE THEOSOPHIST (*Madras*).

On the 4th of July last, Swami Vivekananda, the distinguished pupil and disciple of the late Ramakrishna Paramahansa, departed this life. His brief but brilliant public career dates back from 1893, when he astonished all America by the eloquent orations in which he defended the Hindu religion and expounded the doctrine of the Vedanta. The scene at the platform in the great hall of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, when the meeting broke up, as described in the local newspapers of the day, was most striking. Many of the first ladies in the audience crowded round him in a state of great excitement, overwhelming him with compliments and trying to get a chance to touch his hand, or even to intercept a glance of his eyes. So completely had the Western public been deceived about the character and attainments of the inhabitants of

India, that this quaintly garbed man with the brown skin and deep, penetrating eyes, whose platform oratory challenged comparison with that of the best American public speakers, came flashing before them like a brilliant meteor. Their first impressions were deepened by his subsequent public lectures : he was invited to all parts of the States, and remained in the country until 1896 ; disciples of both sexes gathered about him, a Vedanta Society was formed, several of his fellow-pupils of the Paramahansa went to the States and are still working there, and a demand for ten more helpers was, it is said, recently sent him.

\* \* \* The Swami has left behind him several works of a religious character, but it is as an orator and public teacher that he will be longest remembered. He had a strong personal magnetism and was naturally combative. It can hardly be said that he was a friend of the Theosophical Society, or a believer in the assistance of our Great Teachers ; still, he was an intense Hindu and a most able expounder of the school of philosophy to which he belonged.—*August, 1902.* H. S. O.

## THE UNITED PROVINCES

### THE ADVOCATE (*Lucknow*).

It is with great regret that we announce the death of Swami Vivekananda. The news everywhere will be received with feelings of deep regret and sorrow. In him we have lost not only one of the most popular Vedantists, but a patriot whose heart was full of love for Mother India. Earnest and sincere, always trying to live the life of a practical Vedantist, full of noble emotions and thoughts for the regeneration of the mother-country, his life has been cut short in the very prime of manhood amidst the great sorrow of the community at large. When we last saw him in Calcutta, he was eloquently talking in pure and chaste Hindi, which would do credit to any Upper Indian, about his schemes for the regeneration of India, his face beaming with enthusiasm. Who then thought that the end of the great man who had raised Hindu philosophy so much in the eyes of the West, who could count hundreds of Europeans and Americans as his disciples, and who had by standing temptations in the West showed of what good stuff he was made, was coming so soon ?.....—*July 10, 1902,*

\*\*\* His loss has been mourned with greater grief in Madras, Bombay and Upper India than in Bengal. This we do not attribute, as some friends do, to a queer sort of unreasoning orthodoxy prevailing in Bengal, but to the oft-repeated and well-known proverb that the prophet is less honoured in his own home.....Whatever might be the causes of the little unpopularity of the Swami with his own countrymen in Bengal, the progressive class in orthodox Madras and Upper India simply worshipped him. What was the secret of this popularity? It was his services in America and the practical form of Vedanta religion he preached. About his work in America one need not speak at length, because his opponents also admit that no Hindu or foreigner did more to have the Hindu philosophy respected in foreign lands than the deceased apostle of Vedanta. As to the practical Vedanta religion which he preached, whoever came in contact with him was simply struck by his sound patriotism and broad-mindedness. Addressing the Vedantees who would say that the world is a mere illusion and that the liberation of the human soul can be obtained by distraction of mind only, he would eloquently say that there could not be a greater mistake than to disown the matter-of-fact world and not to play one's part fully so long as the illusion exists. The best form of worship which he would prescribe to his countrymen was to worship the world as the *Virat Swarup* of the All-pervading God. A believer in no caste system, he would dispassionately impress upon his friends the utter futility of attempts to reclaim India through caste organisations. The higher castes having been played out, the great Swami's scheme for the regeneration of India included the reclaiming of Sudras, pointing out that in their hands lay the future of India. To reclaim them from the thralldom of caste would be to get up a mighty force to back the attempt of the elevation of the so-called lower classes. These and similar other views proved the strength of his mind, the earnestness and undaunted spirit in which he attempted to carry out his work. Like Paramahansa Ramakrishna, he was a believer, to a certain extent, in the truths of all religious systems; he would not disparage orthodox Hindus worshipping idols or speak an ill word against any reform movement as they were all, in his light, pushing forward the onward movement of progress\* of mother India. To *Karmakandis* or men who had altogether lost the very spirit of religion for the sake of mere outward forms and formalities, who never attempted to realise its ideal in their own life, he used to point out how India had lost its past greatness. He did not confine himself to mere talk or dissertations, but got several *Ashramas* established under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Mission to relieve the poor, the distressed and the sick; by the earnestness and enthusiasm with which he infected his brother-Sannyasis to work day and night, an experience which was

hitherto unknown to India, the Swami showed the grandeur of his ideas, in which lay the secret of his popularity. In his ten years' work the Swami trained up a band of earnest Sannyasis, not less patriotic than himself. The Mission with Swamis Turiyananda and Abhedananda at present carrying on good work in America and Swami Ramakrishnananda at Madras will, we trust, be able to continue its noble work and thus carry out the wishes of the great patriot whose loss India is so deeply mourning.—*17th July, 1902.*

### THE KAYASTHA SAMACHAR (*Allahabad*)

\*\*\* The loss of such a sincere and genuine patriot at the present juncture in our history is a truly irreparable loss, which we can hardly bear with equanimity.....He was hardly known to fame until his presence at the platform of the World's Parliament of Religions, held at Chicago in 1893, in connection with the grand International Exposition held in that city to commemorate the fourth centenary of the discovery of America. Vivekananda's appearance on the Chicago platform, draped in the orange-coloured robe of a Hindu *Sannyasi*, his lucid and learned exposition of the Vedanta philosophy, his command over the genius and the resources of the English language and his remarkable facility as a public speaker, all combined to create quite a stir in the New World and produced a deep sensation, even in that land of nine days' wonders. Telegraphic message transmitted by Reuter to this country had prepared the people, to accord the Swami on his return most enthusiastic ovations, and his journey from Colombo—where he landed—to Calcutta, his ultimate destination, was made amidst scenes of unparalleled and wildest enthusiasm.

.....Such in brief is a survey of the short, active life of the late Swami, but there is no doubt of the fact that short as his life was and few as the number of years were during which he worked for the public welfare, the moral influence exercised by him and brought to bear upon his countrymen, has been large, out of all proportion to the shortness of the period of his activities. It would take us beyond the scope of this note to discuss the Swami's religious and philosophical views or the influence of his career and character upon the fortunes of his countrymen..... There can be no doubt of the fact that the death of the Swami has removed from our midst a towering genius and a unique personality which we could ill afford to spare, just at present.—*July, 1902.*

**THE PIONEER** (*Allahabad*).

\*\*\*This young Bengalee, Norendra Nath Dutt, B. A. of the early eighties of the last century, is the Swami Vivekananda who, in the course of a comparatively brief career, attained a fame as a religious teacher almost world-wide in its character... He gave Vedantism a shape presentable to the educated man of the present age.....What reflects high credit on him is the success he achieved in winning the heart of many Americans for the metaphysical side of his cult, that is, the highly idealistic basis of Vedantism. But for this success, it must be pointed out, the Swami owed not a little to the rather concealed appreciation for idealism which the American mind naturally possesses.....A people that have produced an Emerson cannot but betray a partiality for a powerful teacher of Vedantism.....The Swami appears to have imitated in his death the *Yogis* of ancient India, who when they thought the body was too weak to contain the soul, would give up the ghost by the mere exercise of their will, aided by that *Yogic* power of control they possessed over their breath. This is called *Ichchhāmṛityu*, or dying at will.—*July 14th, 1902.*

**PUNJAB.****THE TRIBUNE** (*Lahore*).

On Friday last, as already announced, was gathered to the shades of the Gurus the English-educated young Indian monk and preacher of philosophic Hinduism, who by sheer force of individuality rose by one leap from obscurity to renown, and whose genius secured to the much maligned faith of his fathers a high place in the estimation of thoughtful people in the West. Allowing for all that his detractors might say about failings in his character or shortcomings in his teachings, Swami Vivekananda was a truly remarkable man, a man of wonderful powers of persuasion and strength of will, who, with a larger experience of life and a deeper initiation into the realm of spirituality, might have worked wonders in the way of rousing his countrymen from their comatose condition in matters religious and social if his life had been spared longer. It is indeed a case of a most promising career cut short, of the spark of life burning out before it reached its fulfilment. What the Swami, however, achieved during his short term of public life was no small thing. He it was who more than any other scholar or preacher contributed to establish the claim of philosophic Hinduism to respectful attention and careful study among the peoples of the West by standing

forth in their midst as a concrete and brilliant example of the culture produced by it. In his own country his genius, besides giving form and shape to the cult which deifies his revered Guru, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, as the last of the Incarnations, has brought into being a movement of practical benevolence which reminds one of the monks of old who went about preaching and practising the gospel of service to humanity. The Ramakrishna Mission is now a well-organised institution in the country whose members are seen working quietly in famine tracts or plague-infected areas, bringing relief to the needy and succour to the distressed according to their humble means. The monasteries established by the Swamiji at Belur, Mayavati, and other places are centres for the cultivation, by educated men who have renounced the world, of the practical religion preached by their Master, of service to humanity and devotion (*Bhakti*) to the Lord through the Guru. It was Vivekananda's genius that gave shape to this new and unique movement of a new school of monks in modern times, though perhaps the force of his revered Master's spirit was behind. Ramakrishna was remarkable for his sayings, which have now passed into current proverbs in the Bengali language : Vivekananda was great in action and organising capacity. And as men of action have to come into contact and friction with the world, Vivekananda had his critics and detractors. But although the universal love and admiration that followed his Guru was not his lot, and although judged by conventional standards he might be found failing here and there, not his severest critic could deny that Vivekananda was a remarkable personality and a heroic character, the best of whose aspirations and energies were devoted, not to the aggrandisement of self, but to the uplifting of his fallen countrymen.....—*July 10, 1902.*

All the different Provinces of India equally mourn the irreparable loss the country has suffered by the sudden and untimely death of Swami Vivekananda. The Madras Presidency, where the late Swami was most popular and where one comes across Vivekananda Societies and Vivekananda Town Halls, naturally mourns the most. Public meetings are being held all over the Presidency to mourn the sad event which the Madrasis consider as a national calamity, and it is remarkable that even Mahomedans and Christians are coming forward with words of sympathy and sorrow.....Notes of grief are pouring in from all parts of the Presidency in prose and verse. \* \* \*—*July 15, 1902.*




## CEYLON.

### THE HINDU ORGAN (*Jaffna*).

We issued an extraordinary sheet on the 10th instant, containing the Special Telegrams from Colombo sent to us as soon as the sad intelligence of the death of this most revered and renowned sage and Hindu Missionary was published in the Colombo dailies. We need hardly say that a genuine feeling of very deep regret pervades the Hindu community here at the death of the Swami. It is but five years ago the Swami paid a visit to Jaffna and was accorded a most hearty and enthusiastic reception by the Hindu public. He then thrilled audiences composed not only of Hindus, but also of Christians, by his unmatched eloquence and religious fervour; and this visit of the Swami is, and will always be, remembered by the Hindus of Jaffna as an important event connected with the revival of Hinduism here.

The Swami was undoubtedly the greatest Hindu Missionary of modern times. All other great Hindu sages and reformers confined their action within the limits of India. But it was the Swami Vivekananda who preached Hinduism in America and Europe, convinced a large number of people in those continents of the truths of this ancient Religion, and made several converts to his faith. Although he has trained others to carry on the work he had commenced in the West, yet his death is an irreparable loss to the cause of Hinduism, and it would be long before his place can be filled.—*July 16th, 1902.*



# APPENDIX D.

## IN MEMORIAM : POEMS.

### VIVEKANANDA.

#### IN LOVING HOMAGE, AND IN HOPE.

Broken, again, the golden bowl. Again  
Loosened the silver cord. Lo ! once again  
The spirit of the Lord has rent earth's bonds ;  
And that embodiment of the divine,  
Known among men as Vivekananda,  
Is known no more forever. It has passed !

In touching grief the fir-tree loud laments  
The falling of the cedar. High-piled peaks  
Of snow-topped ranges in the far-off East  
Have donned a darksome shadow ; for they mourn.  
The Western Thames glides, grieving, through its vales.  
The Seine moves sadly on its course. Afar  
The mountain masses of America  
Peer, sadly, skyward. Earth's full forces throb  
With reverential sorrow and regret.  
Throughout the world's domain, homes, here and there  
Hold hearts that ache. Tears fall and sobs resound  
For he who was our Teacher is no more !

Our Teacher ! nay, our Father, Lover, Friend !  
No separating sense of race or shade  
Or blood or creed, within his gracious soul  
Found resting-place ; for all the sons of men  
Are, too, the sons of God. He taught us that :  
He taught that God within man dwelt in truth ;  
That no lone creature stood without the Love  
That builds and breaks and builds again  
For very love. That breaks—but builds again !  
An ochre-coloured garment robed him round.  
As, prophet-like, he moved within our midst,  
Flooding each seeking soul with that true light  
That shone through all the ages, and still shines  
Above all clouds of creeds and fack of creeds.

His voice, sonorous, sweet, or spoke or sung  
Of the Eternal One, the God in man,  
The God of All, in all; a Fatherhood  
Supreme; Fraternity inviolate.

List'ning, men's former foolish fancies fled,  
Their little feeble thoughts like bubbles burst,  
Yet, in their bursting, caught from that fair light  
Fresh colour and fresh form. 'Twas thus we learned  
How, of infantine images of fear and faith,  
To raise an edifice, enduring, strong  
As the strength of Him Who built the worlds,  
Founded in Him, by Him sustained eternal.

We thank him and we praise him, that he brought  
Out from the East—whence wisdom wends its way,  
Into the waiting West—his loving heart  
Loyal in every pulse to touch of truth,  
In travail for our welfare.

In his face

Serenely steadfast, glowing with the Light,  
We saw sweet signs of selflessness, and rest,  
And moveless peace and measureless content.

Stately he strode by right of rectitude;  
Crowned with great grace and charm and dignity  
Full princely. And while humblest lowly hearts he drew,  
Most haughty spirits to his spell succumbed.  
His brilliant eyes flashed with the "scorn of scorn";  
Anon, in seas of sympathy they swam;  
His words melodious stirred the sluggish soul  
Into desire to breathe the breath of life;  
His utterance a wid'ning worship woke.  
Wherefore, for all, we thank him and we praise.

Called to his own he left us. Still we hope.  
For He who builds and breaks shall build again!  
Yea! In His time, the world will welcome One  
On whom the mantle of the glorious dead  
Shall light; in Whom the Spirit of the Lord  
Shall come once more to take life's burden up  
And solace, cheer, and save; like unto him!

ERIC HAMMOND.

## A TRIBUTE TO VIVEKANANDA.

Lo ! India weeps, with the sound of the death-knell tolling :

A star has faded in the Eastern sky.

The dreaded foe, the fates of men controlling,

Coldly refused to pass the hero by :

Weep India of thy noblest son bereft !

Ah, Genius claimed him as her very own,

Upon his brow her glorious mark she left,

His soul was kindred to the gods alone,

And India gives him with a bitter groan.

And Genius sighs—while the tears of the nation are flowing

And sad the melancholy Muses pine,

But in our hearts an ardent fire is glowing,

To pay our tribute at the hero's shrine.

Ah, you who turned the spirit's mystic tide,

And gave new life-blood unto foreign lands,

Thy country's hero and thy nation's pride,

Oh, hear the prayers she weeping upward sends,

And take the offering from her trembling hands.

O Power Divine, look down on thy children's deep sorrow,

Nor leave them in their hour of woe alone.

Open their eyes to love's more glorious morrow,

Give them the peace they seek at Indra's throne.

India ! behold them weeping for thy son !

Honoured by thee, revered and loved abroad ;

Who, ah ! too soon from out their midst has gone.

He trod the path that patriots have trod

And loved his country as he loved his God.

The breezes whisper, while the murmuring west winds are sighing ;

The throbbing sea echoes the sad refrain,

The hoary mountains to the sound replying,

Send forth the message o'er the distant plain,

Send on the word o'er land and ocean wide,

And many a heart with bitter sorrow bent,

Will still recall the hero's work with pride,

A daring messenger whom gods had sent,

High raising India's name where'er he went.

But seasons roll by, and years will be coming and going,

And mortals must go, the path for all men is the same.

Well have they lived who leave the world bestowing

Upon posterity a hallowed name.

Then mingle with the death-knell's sombre chime  
 Hope for new strength, will to delay your fears.  
 His noble work will live throughout all time ;  
 His monument, washed in a nation's tears,  
 Will be a holy shrine in future years.

A. CHRISTINA ALBERS.

—:O:—

### IN MEMORIAM.

Great soul ! They say and sigh he's dead ;  
 Can it be true ? That noble mien,  
 That child-like face, those radiant eyes,  
 Can we, O God ! behold no more ?  
 No more, alas ! no more. He's gone.  
 'Tis true, cruelly true, though sudd'n  
 The tidings came like lightning's flash  
 Across a clear and azure sky.  
 O cruel Fate ! Is it Thy will  
 That fallen Ind should fallen be  
 For e'er ? Or why hast thou recalled  
 The conqu'ring hero from his field ?  
 Poor India weeps ; her wail echoes  
 O'er hill and stream across the sea ;  
 And, hark ! how weeps the world entire,  
 Its warring creeds, its varied tribes !  
 And why this universal wail  
 For a poor, beggar, homeless monk ?  
 These myriad meetings ev'rywhere  
 T'immortalise a hermit's name ?  
 Born tho' in Ind, a patriot still,  
 He made the wide, wide world his home ;  
 He scoffed at castes and knew no creeds,  
 He taught that man was man all o'er.  
 He sang a sweet philosophy  
 In logic bold and language pure,  
 And gave the nectar of its truths  
 To aching heads and panting hearts,

The envious creeds that tried to scoff  
 Were charmed to love the man, and learn  
 The truths sublime he preached in love.  
 'Tis ignorance that envy breeds.

Weep, weep, poor India ! weep ; thy cause  
 Is just ; thy loss is great ; the heart  
 Breaks, oh, to think that he is dead.  
 How fond love hopes he is alive !

May, God ! his soul in peace repose !  
 Ne'er more his soul in flesh be clothed !  
 May he in Thee his soul submerge  
 And live in ecstasy divine !

Y. S.

—————:O:—————

### A TRIBUTE OF AFFECTION.

Brother Swami Vivekananda,  
 Bright pearl of the Orient sea,  
 Came here with his soul all illumined  
 By Light, Love, and Liberty.

He came here with greetings fraternal  
 From the mystical East to our West ;  
 And from those wise Vedas inspired  
 He taught us the purest and best.

He brought us a message most gracious  
 From the long past ages of time ;  
 He came as the Priest and the Prophet,  
 Enthused with a faith all sublime.

Right soon to our hearts he found entrance,  
 So lovable, so gentle was he,—  
 And as *teacher* or *friend* was so winning,  
 None could other than lover be.

He proclaimed ancient truths with wisdom,  
 And his eloquence quickly did win  
 Many earnest and faithful disciples,  
 Whom he taught of their God-powers within.

God bless our dear brother Swami,  
 May his path grow ever more bright ;  
 And as his earth journey is finished  
 He be clothed in God's garments of light.

DR. JOHN C. WYMAN.  
*(Brooklyn, New York.)*

————:O:————

## A LOVING TRIBUTE TO SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

A pure, grand soul hath left us journeying here  
 While he, a victor crowned, hath sped to heav'nlier sphere :  
 We mourn our loss, and sadly gaze, with grief untold,  
 Along that shining way on which his spirit bold,  
 Yet calm and wise, hath gone. Alas, no more  
 Shall we his gentle presence know. *This* we deplore !

"To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die,"  
 A poet sang. *So lives he* in our hearts for aye.  
 The magic spell of his surpassing eloquence  
 Oft filled our souls with longings deep intense  
 And prayerful, as the splendour of his thought,  
 All glowing with a light from heaven caught,  
 Moved us to wonder, rapture, smiles and tears,—  
 Sweet memories to linger through th'eternal years !

Farewell, Dear Brother ! Thou wert one of "God's own kin,"—  
 Thy home of *peace* and *rest* thou now hast entered in !

DR. JOHN C. WYMAN.

————:O:————

## TO THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

Immortal son of Ind ! Thy land to-day  
 From snowy peaks of Northern Him, to low  
 Red strand of Comorin with grief is low ;  
 And loud with wail resounds from sea to bay.  
 Nor Ind alone thy early loss thus bewail :  
 Climes far off where thine words did spread that light  
 Of Love and Faith and Truth and changed to bright  
 The minds in which did doubt and shadow prevail,  
 Do share the grief alike. Thou gifted soul !

A passing meteor like, illumined bright,  
 And vanished ere the world awoke as a whole.  
 Primeval Ind ! Rare on thy laps alight  
 Such favoured child. For sacrifice the crown  
 Is thine, the heir to fair immortal renown.

M. J. (*Trichinopoly*).

—:O:—

### A LOVING TRIBUTE TO SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

Immortal Son of Aryan land,  
 O patriot-souled Vivekananda !  
 Tho' brief thy mortal stay on Earth,  
 We bless the day that hailed thy birth.  
 In two-score years thy race was run,  
 In ten short years thy work was done :  
 Thy Blissful life, so truly wise,  
 Flashed like a meteor in the skies.  
 Thy voice rang out so sweet and clear,  
 And vanquished ev'ry doubt and fear—  
 It sang of Life, it sang of Love,  
 It sang of Peace that dwells Above.  
 It sang of Karma's endless chain,  
 It sang of Dharma's priceless gain ;  
 In accents sweet it led the soul,  
 On Bhakti's wings to Mukti's goal.  
 How oft thy feet from door to door  
 Had walked to aid the friendless poor !  
 For them thy heart was spent with sighs,  
 For them thy pray'rs had rent the skies.  
 Thy Star did rise in Western lands,  
 And homage drew from alien hands—  
 O mystic Light by India blest,  
 O link that bound the East and West !  
 Samsara's stream flows full and strong,  
 And down its course we speed along :  
 Our barks are frail, as fast they sail,  
 Our eyes are blind by Maya's veil.



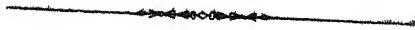
O kindly Friend ! Be thou our ark,  
And help us cross these waters dark :  
O Perfect-Soul, be thou our sight,  
And lead us still from Night to Light !

M. G. V. (*Bangalore*).

# AVE ATQUE VALE ! HALE AND FAREWELL !

[IN MEMORY OF THE SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.]

They have no need of Death to set them free,  
Whom Life could never bind. To souls unvext  
Of man's vain hopes and fears, Death can but be  
The passing from one room into the next ;  
The calm of twilight and the setting sun ;  
The call to cease from labour, and to rest ;  
The natural sleep of night, when day is done ;  
The blithe leave-taking of the parting guest.  
If we could lose such spirits, we should deem  
Man the poor thrall of sorrow and of shame,  
And with false hearts and recreant lips blaspheme  
God, when we call Him by His holiest name.  
All things most high kept with him to the end,  
Who knew the truth of Life, and finds its peace.  
All things that cannot die—these mourn my friend,  
That living loved them—and I mourn with these.  
--Pakenham Beatty, in the *Myetic*.



# APPENDIX E.

## MEMORIAL MEETINGS.

*(Extracts from some of the Reports.)*

### NEW YORK.

A Memorial Service in honour of the Blessed Swami Vivekananda was held by the Vedanta Society of New York, in the Society House, on October 26th, 1902. \* \* \* The service opened with prayers, meditation, and an address by the Swami Abhedananda.....Although his emotion was so intense as at times well-nigh to master him, the Swami Abhedananda was none the less able to bring home forcefully to his listeners all that they owed to the Swami Vivekananda as the daring pioneer who had first proclaimed the lofty truths of Vedanta to America.

Dr. Parker, the President of the Society, next dwelt with earnest reverence upon what it had meant to them and to the world to have known so profound a thinker and so great a spiritual leader, and how irretrievable must be his loss to all concerned in the uplifting of the human race. Resolutions were then passed regarding the deep sense of sorrow of the members and the great and irreparable loss to the Society in the untimely passing away of the Blessed Swami Vivekananda, the Founder, Master, and Spiritual Director of the Vedanta Society of New York, and sending heartfelt sympathy to his brother-Sannyasins, disciples, followers, and co-workers residing in the monastery at Belur, in Madras and other parts of India, in Europe and America. Then Mr. Goodyear, Dr. Street and Miss McLeod, who were Swamiji's disciples, spoke in their turn paying glowing tribute to him, while Miss Sarah Farmer, the founder of the Summer School for the Comparative Study of Religions at Greenacre, who was prevented by the severe illness of a near relative from being present, wrote of him in the following terms:

"My duty is here, but in reality my spirit will be with you all as you bear witness to the spiritual uplift which, under God, you all received from this dear Brother. To know him was a renewed consecration; to have him under one's roof was to feel empowered to go forth to the children of men and to help them all to a realisation of their birthright as Sons of God. What Greenacre owes to him cannot be put into words. A little band of people had started to prove the providing care of God

for those who rely upon Him in utter faith and love. This great soul came into our midst and did more than any other to give to the work its true tone, for he *lived* every day the truths which his lips proclaimed, and was to us the living evidence of the power manifested nineteen hundred years ago in that he went about his Father's business in perfect joyousness and childlike trust, without 'purse or script' and found all promises fulfilled, all needs met. For ever after, as he grew in knowledge and in power, his influence increased among us and helped to strengthen our faith, and to-day his power for good is even greater and will continue to be, if we are true to Him who worketh in us 'to will and to do His good pleasure.'

"When the news of the transition of this beloved servant of God reached us, we assembled in the grove consecrated by him and his Brothers and under 'the Prophet's Pine' gave thanks to God for what he had been to us, for what he is now and ever will be. It was a blessed hour, and I pray that to-morrow the Spirit of God may move mightily among you all, leading each to know the unity of God, and find that in Him we are all one, visibly and invisibly, clothed upon with Him who is our Sun and Shield.

"May this transition give renewed impetus to his work here and in the far East. I shall always give thanks that I was permitted to work at his side when the first precious seeds were planted in New York. God bless you all !"

Mrs. Ole Bull, who like Miss Farmer, had witnessed the incalculable good accomplished by Swami Vivekananda at Greenacre as well as in other parts of the United States and at home among his own people, made an eloquent appeal for earnest workers, who in return for the priceless spiritual teaching which India had sent to them, would go out to aid her in the reconstruction of her social fabric, not by offering her new ideals, but by helping her men and women to value and apply those given to them ages ago by their own Great Teachers.

So impressive and convincing were her words that few could have heard them without feeling the desire to share in the noble work already begun by Ramakrishna's disciples; and when at the close Swami Abhedananda, in ringing tones recited Swami Vivekananda's "Song of the Sannyasin," every heart must have felt renunciation a privilege, and the voice which had first uttered that loud call to freedom worth following wherever it might lead.

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## SAN FRANCISCO.

[TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.]

The sad news has just reached us by way of New York of the sudden taking off of the most worshipful Master Swami Vivekananda, who peacefully passed into the arms of the Infinite Mother on July the fourth. Our beloved has followed Him for whom his favourite theme was "My Master." Never man has written sweeter things of one he loved. As he loved and revered his Master, so we will love and cherish his sacred memory. He was one of the greatest souls that has visited the earth for many centuries. An incarnation of his Master, of Krishna, Buddha, Christ and all other great souls, he came fitted to fill the needs of the times as they are now. His was a twin soul to that of his Master, who represented the whole philosophy of all religions, be they ancient or modern. Vivekananda has shaken the whole world with his sublime thoughts, and they will echo down through the halls of time until time shall be no more. To him all people and all creeds were one. He had the patience of Christ and the generosity of the sun that shines and the air of heaven. To him a child could talk, a beggar, a prince, a slave, or harlot. He said: "They are all of one family, I can see myself in all of them and they in me. The world is one family, and its parent and Infinite Ocean of Reality, Brahman."

Nature had given him a physique beautiful to look upon, with features of an Apollo. But nature had not woven the warp and woof of his mortal frame so that it might withstand the wear and tear of a tremendous will within and the urgent calls from without. For he gave himself to a waiting world. Coming to this country as he did, a young man, a stranger in a foreign land, and meeting with the modern world's choicest divines, and holding those great and critical audiences of the World's Congress of Religions in reverential awe, with his high Spiritual Philosophy and sublime oratory, was an unusual strain for one so young. No other person stood out with such magnificent individuality; no creed or dogma could so stand. No other one had a message of such magnitude. Professors of our great universities listened with profound respect. "Compared to whose gigantic intellect these were as mere children," "This great Hindoo Cyclone has shaken the world;" this was said after he passed through Detroit, Mich. No tongue was foreign to him, no people and no clime were strange. The whole world was his field of labour. His reward is now a season of rest in the Infinite Mother's arms, then to return to a waiting world. When he comes again, then may we appreciate the fullness of his great spirit. And may we who knew him latest be in the flesh at that time.

While on a visit to this far Pacific Coast many of us had unusual opportunities of knowing him. The sad news of his untimely death comes to us with all the profound mystery of mortal death, intensified to a profound degree. He is to us what Jesus Christ is to many devout Christians. Although no more with us in the flesh, having been relieved of an insidious disease, the result of over-strain, yet he is with us more than before. We consider that we were exceedingly fortunate to have known him in the flesh, to have communed with him in person and to have felt the sweet influence of his Divine presence.

May our Mantram ever be  
 Infinite, eternal Bliss to Thee,  
 Our dearly beloved Swamijee,  
 All the days and nights of eternity.

In the death of the Swamijee our cause at large has suffered the loss of a great and beloved leader, whose genial smile, pleasant words and affable address made his presence ever welcome. His was a pronounced personality with the noblest of attributes, both human and divine; he gave himself to the world. He lived up to the highest standard of spirituality, so that his name, character and memory are an inspiration and benediction to his followers.

'There is no death.' An Angel form  
 Walks o'er the earth in silent tread.  
 He bears our best loved things away—  
 And then we call them 'dead.'

"But ever near us, though unseen,  
 The dear immortal spirits tread ;  
 For all the boundless universe  
 Is life—there are no dead."

Brother, Companion, Master,—Peace and Farewell !

In view of the foregoing be it

RESOLVED, That while we may not perfectly understand why our Great Leader has been so suddenly called from our midst, we reverently bow to the will of the Supreme Mother, who is too wise to err and too good to be unkind.

RESOLVED, That although we cannot satisfactorily philosophise over the death of our honoured Master, our confidence remains unshaken in the Infinite Spirit, and we firmly believe that his companion Sannyasins will be sweetly and adequately comforted and receive the consolations of the Divine Spirit according to the measure of their need.

RESOLVED, That this expression of our love and affection for our

dear departed Master be spread upon the records of the Class, and that copies thereof be forwarded to his fellow-Sannyasins at the Math in India and elsewhere.

Reverently submitted,

SAN FRANCISCO CLASS OF VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY.

M. H. LOGAN, President.

C. F. PETERSEN, Vice-President.

A. S. WOLLBERG, Secretary.

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### CALCUTTA.

At the Vivekananda Memorial meeting held in the Town Hall of Calcutta, the following Resolutions were passed :—

I. That this meeting records its sense of deep sorrow at the sad and untimely death of Swami Vivekananda, who devoted his life to the furtherance of the religious and moral regeneration of his country and sought to accomplish its welfare by inaugurating various religious and philanthropic institutions.

II. That this meeting desires to place on record its grateful appreciation of the eminent services rendered by Swami Vivekananda to the cause of Hindu religion by his eloquent and masterly exposition of Hinduism at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893 and subsequently in different parts of America, England and India, guided by the light which he received from his great Master Paramahansa Ramakrishna.

III. That a committee consisting of the leading men of Calcutta be formed to raise necessary funds for a suitable memorial in honour of the late Swami Vivekananda.

IV. That a copy of the foregoing Resolutions be forwarded to the Sannyasins of the Belur Math under the signature of the Chairman of the meeting expressing its sympathy for the irreparable loss sustained by them.

The following is an extract from the speech delivered by Mr. N. N. Ghose, the Editor of "The Indian Nation" :—

\*\*\* The Swami is entitled to our veneration not so much as a scholar, as a thinker, as an orator, or even as a missionary of our religion, but as a sincere and intensely devout religious man.....What right have I, what right have any of us, immersed in worldly pursuits, engaged in selfish ends,—either wealth or honour or fame or all combined,—what right have we to say that we are sincere admirers of the saintly Vivekananda who not only preached Vedantism but lived

it? Vedantism was in his hands not a mere philosophy, not a thing to be merely shouted out from a platform, not a militant weapon for destroying this or that creed, but as something constructive and healing. He cherished it not as a metaphysical doctrine but as a religion; not as instrument of criticism and controversy, but as something teaching humility and reverence. He believed in and taught something higher even than the doctrine of the brotherhood of man, namely, the absolute oneness of all that exists. If we mean really to admire a man we have to imitate him as far as possible, to follow his example and precepts. If Vivekananda was original in anything, it was in the life he lived. A Hindu saint does not consider it his duty to preach. It is enough for him if he can see the light, live the ideal life and work out his own salvation. Vivekananda's life was a life as well of quietude as of exertion. In him were combined the two ideals, that of the Hindu saint, meditative and passionless, and that of the religious man of the West, who must preach what he knows, and work for the well-being of others. In him, therefore, there was the happy conflux of the East and West as regards the ideal of the religious life. He was in the world but not of it, working for his fellowmen with the utmost might but with his interest and affections and secret pieties of the heart fixed on the Divine.....

The Resolution refers to the work of the Swami in England and America. There is something specially valuable in that work. An ordinary preacher of Hinduism before a non-Hindu audience can expect to be only scoffed at. Vivekananda by his exposition was not only not scoffed at, but he conquered. He inspired a respect for himself and for what was infinitely greater to him, his religion. His very first effort was a triumph, and the promise that he raised was fulfilled by his subsequent work. It is just as well that the light of our religion has been communicated, even in some very small measure, to some section of the West..... I have so great confidence in the ultimate triumph of what is true in thought and faith, that I am led to hope that Hinduism, if it perishes on Indian soil, will re-appear in other climes and under other suns. Sturdy sons of the West, full of earnestness, honesty and courage, and not demoralised by slavery, will know how to cherish a truth after once they have appreciated it, and will know also how to spread it far and wide. And if all that is essential in Hinduism finds a home and nursery in the West, Vivekananda will deserve to be remembered as the first Hindu who helped in that consummation. I am aware of no English-educated Hindu who has done so much to interpret Hinduism, to show its deeper spiritual significance to Western minds and the westernised minds of our own country. He may have differed from some in regard to the social or ceremonial aspect of Hinduism, but it was his habit

never to emphasise differences. He took it upon himself not to denounce but to interpret Hinduism, and in the attempt to explain it he never sought to explain it away. He remained a Hindu to the last, humble, reverential, tolerant, catholic, like his great Master.

Here was a fine, emancipated soul. To the emancipated, death makes no difference. They are emancipated when alive, emancipated after death. Vivekananda has passed away, but while we fancy he is removed from us by worlds, it is possible he is here, in the very midst of us. We say we are met here to commemorate him, but if we are not even partially imbued, and do not seek to imbue ourselves, with the spirit of his teachings, and if with his penetrative insight he looks into our hearts *he* will not be thankful for our proceedings but will rather rebuke us for this mere mockery and pageant of grief. Ramakrishna Paramahansa left him as a disciple and successor. I cannot say if *he* leaves an heir. I cannot say if this movement for a memorial will have any greater success than other movements of similar kind. But whether his memory is preserved or not in bronze or marble, let us make an effort to preserve it in ourselves. I have read his writings not only with pleasure but also with profit. From some of them, I have received instruction which has revolutionised some of my ideas. And I am sanguine enough to hope that a careful study of what he has left behind will produce similar effects on the minds of many of you. By an incorporation in ourselves, to the extent that is possible, of the lessons of his life and his lectures, let us seek to treasure up his memory and bear witness to his work.....



### FROM THE GITA SOCIETY OF CALCUTTA.

To—The Superior, Ramakrishna Mission, Belur Math.

Dear Sir,—As President of the Gita Society, I crave leave to lay before you the following message with reference to the melancholy death of Swami Vivekananda. The Resolution, I have the honour to submit, was carried with becoming solemnity at a special meeting of the Society, held under my presidency on Sunday, the 6th July, 1902, the vast assembly standing up in utter grief to do honour to the sacred memory of the illustrious departed.

Resolved “that this Meeting desires to place on record its sense of deep sorrow at the sad and untimely death of Swami Vivekananda, who devoted the best years of his life with unflagging zeal and enthusiasm to the propagation of Vedantism and of Hindu philosophy and theology generally in the West. By his death the Hindu community has suffered



an irreparable loss, which is keenly felt throughout the length and breadth of the country."

To Swami Vivekananda belongs the undying honour of being the pioneer in the noble work of Hindu religious revival, consummated by bringing Western thought to bear upon it in appreciation of the beauty and grandeur of its doctrine and discipline. The heroic efforts of the Swami towards uniting the East and the West into a fraternal union by the silken ties of spiritual kinship, deservedly met with a considerable measure of success. He dedicated his life to the blessed task of spreading the light of Hindu thought, which attained to the sublimest flights that the mind of man can ever ascend, in the Western land of mists and shadows, overshadowed by doubts, perplexities and errors, and steeped in materialism of the grossest type, and the good seed since sown by him in America and Europe promises to germinate and yield an abundant harvest in the fulness of time. It was almost entirely owing to his genial personality, his vast culture and erudition in the lore of Vedantism, his unbounded sympathy, his simplicity and unostentatiousness and his earnestness and will, that Hindu philosophy and theology could make such headway, and be appraised at its true worth in Western countries. He devoted himself with the whole force of his gigantic intellect to achieve the regeneration and moral conquest of the world by the illumination of Hindu religion and philosophy and to harmonise the aggressive civilisation of the West, against which the trend of religious ideas in Christendom seems to be absolutely impotent in robbing it of its conspicuous character of iron and blood, on lives of harmony, spirituality and bliss.

There is yet another aspect of the surpassing usefulness of the late Swami, worthy of the highest commendation, which brings out in prominent relief, the nobility of his character, the loftiness of his aims and the feminine kindness of his heart. Rare, indeed, is the example he has so gloriously set of disinterested and almost selfless philanthropy. We all remember with admiration and gratitude, the magnificent work of rescue and succour undertaken and accomplished by the noble band of self-sacrificing workers of the Ramakrishna Mission, under the inspiration and guidance of the late Swami. As the accredited head of this earnest band of devoted workers he organised with remarkable success, extensive philanthropic works in different parts of India for the alleviation of pain, misery and wretchedness. This silent but practical altruism has left a permanent record in the annals of the country and impressed the popular mind with a profound sense of moral duty, with which asceticism can be associated.

Such, indeed, was his character—a man in a million—who has laid down the burden of life to the intense sorrow of his admiring country-

men and passed away after the end of his temporary journey in this fleeting world, into peace eternal on his Maker's breast. The Venerable Swami was in every sense a Prince among men, whose purity of life, loftiness of aims and principles and many-sided activity have entitled him through generations yet unborn, to the admiring gratitude of posterity.

"He was a man, take him for all in all ;  
We shall not look upon his like again."

On behalf of the members of the Gita Society, I desire to offer you together with your brethren of the Ramakrishna Mission our sincerest and heartfelt condolence for the sad untimely death of Swami Vivekananda. We mourn over his death because we are painfully conscious that a tower of strength for the Hindu community, that valiantly swept away the stronghold of prejudices against Hindu life and thought has suddenly disappeared, which might under God's providence have achieved incalculable good to the general cause of Indian reform. We venture to join our tears with those of his brethren of the Mission and offer them our heart-felt condolence, because we have the firm faith and abiding conviction that "sorrow shared is sorrow soothed," and I am desirous to submit that none shares your poignant grief with greater sympathy than the members of the Gita Society.

We all pray to the Almighty Father, who is the giver of all good, that the immortal soul of the late lamented Swami Vivekananda, which has flown to Him, may rest in peace for ever and ever. *Requiescat in pace !*

I am, yours in deep mourning,

NORENDRA NATH SEN, *President, Gita Society.*

To—The President of the Gita Society.

Dear sir,—Your kind note of sympathy enclosing the Resolution of the Society to express its deep sense of sorrow at the loss, has reached our hands. We hasten to send in our grateful thanks for the same, on behalf of all the *Sannyasins* of the Ramakrishna Math.

Irreparable as the loss has been to ourselves, it gives us joy even at this time to think that the unselfish labours of our dear Swami on behalf of his motherland, are being appreciated in the midst of his own people, however slightly. Time alone will show the extent of his labours, and how much he has raised Mother India in the estimation of the great nations of the West.

The sower has sown the seed and gone to his rest, but shall we be able to hold our own and carry on the great work, which he has so

nobly begun? Let us hope so; in the meantime let us all rally round the sacred memory of the great life that has been just taken away from among us, for united effort, for the regeneration of our own land and people.

With thanks again for your sympathy, and with blessings and best-wishes, we remain.

Faithfully Yours,  
Brahmananda,  
President, The Ramakrishna Math, Belur.

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#### AT BHOWANIPUR, CALCUTTA.

The Excelsior Union of Bhowanipur, Calcutta, held a meeting to do honour to the memory of the Swami Vivekananda. There was a large gathering of the students of the locality in the spacious hall of the South Suburban School, and Babu Rabindra Nath Tagore, the great poet, presided. The speaker of the evening, Mr. Ananda Charan Mittra, one of the Vice-Presidents of the Union, gave expression to the deep regard in which the Swamiji was held by the whole Hindu community, and exhorted his admirers to worship his memory not in the Western way of erecting a statue or hanging a portrait, but by treasuring up his teaching in the recesses of their hearts and endeavouring to live up to that exalted ideal which had moved in such a profound way even the materialistic West. At the request of the Secretary, the Sister Nivedita explained to the meeting the secret of the Swami's success in the Western world and emphasised in her own inimitable way that absolutely fearless patriotism which was the most striking feature of the great Swamiji's character, bringing into strong contrast the ague fits by which the average Indian is convulsed at the least imagining of any danger into which his country's cause may lead him. The President having summed up the Swami's work and teachings on much the same lines in Bengalee, the meeting terminated.

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#### AT THE ALBERT HALL, CALCUTTA.

On 23rd August 1902, a Memorial meeting of the Hindu Students of Calcutta was held at the Albert Hall, and it was decided that the

best means of perpetuating Swamiji's memory was to form an organisation of a band of young workers to be styled, "The Vivekananda Society," whose chief aim would be to meditate upon his pure and saintly character and to try to work on the lines indicated by him and continue as far as possible the humanitarian and philanthropic works inaugurated by him.

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#### AT THE VIVEKANANDA MEMORIAL BOARDING HOUSE, CALCUTTA.

On the 17th of January 1903, under the presidency of Swami Saradananda a Memorial Meeting in connection with Swamiji's Birthday Anniversary was held at the Vivekananda Memorial Boarding House, Calcutta. Sister Nivedita, Mr. N. N. Ghose and others addressed the meeting. Mr. N. N. Ghose in the course of his speech said :—

".....Amongst those who have expounded the Eastern creed in a Western language, I am not aware of one more sound, more refined and more impressive than the Swami Vivekananda. His writings and speeches are the most popular exposition of Vedantism that I am aware of. I say 'popular' not by way of reproach. They are singularly free from pedantry, from metaphysical verbiage. They are plain and direct. They anticipate popular objections and answer them. They shirk no difficulties : leave no corners obscure. And what is most remarkable of all is, that the Swami lived the life he preached. He was at once a Yogi and a man of action....."

He suggested that the best means of commemorating Swamiji's memory would be to open hostels like the present one, and schools for preaching his teachings, or to found a chair in the Sanskrit College to teach the Vedanta as explained by him. Continuing the subject he said :

"Another suitable mode will be a memorial edition of his writings and speeches. They ought to be popularised. If possible they ought to be in every Hindu home where English can be read. At present, I regret to say, they are not generally well-known and not easily accessible. But after all, the best memorial of a man is men. Great men live through their disciples, the men who keep up their traditions, follow their examples and continue their work. True Christians are the best memorial of Jesus Christ. Swami Vivekananda was the greatest memorial of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa....."

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## BOMBAY.

A crowded meeting was held on the 26th September in the Gaiety Theatre at Bombay, under the presidency of the Hon'ble Sir Bhal Chandra Krishna in memory of the late Swami Vivekananda. The chairman with a few introductory remarks regarding the life of the late Swami Vivekananda, asked Sister Nivedita to address the meeting. She rose in the midst of deafening cheers and addressed the meeting for nearly an hour and a half dwelling on the life and work of the late Swami and his *guru*, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. She said that she came there to speak as the disciple and daughter of the late Swami. She concluded her remarks hoping that the people would be true to themselves and true to the mighty treasure (of Hindu religion) that they held ;—they held it not for their own benefit but for the benefit of the world, of the suffering humanity. The Hon'ble Mr. Daji Abaji Khare then moved the following proposition, which being seconded by Mr. N. V. Gokhale was passed with acclamations.

"That this meeting places on record its sense of the great loss the country has suffered by the premature demise of the late Swami Vivekananda and expresses its high appreciation of his great work and example." Mr. Hiralal V. Shroff and Mr. Chafekar addressed the meeting in Gujrathi and Mahrathi respectively. Mr. Hardeoram Nanabhai, Barrister-at-law, in supporting Mr. Khare's proposition said :—

"I address you because Swami Vivekananda belonged to my community—the Kayastha community—and because he was in England when I happened to be there, and I know what people and independent critics thought of his work. The people of England are utterly ignorant of things Indian, but I must say at the same time to their credit, that they are very anxious—extremely anxious—to know everything possible about India. \* \* \* When our people teach them the Vedanta religion they will begin to respect us. Swami Vivekananda did great work there ; I am not exaggerating anything ; I am telling you exactly what I heard from the people in England themselves. Once he preached in my neighbourhood. I say that at that time he created quite a sensation in England. If he had remained there a few months more he would have done still better, and had he remained there for ten years he would have created quite a revolution. In conclusion, I say that Swami Vivekananda has done in England in the realm of religion what Mr. Dadabhoy Naoroji has done in the realm of politics."

## MADRAS.

A Public Meeting of the Hindu community of Madras was held at Pachaiyappa's College to give expression to the deep sense of the great loss which India had sustained in the death of Swami Vivekananda and to take steps to perpetuate his memory in a suitable form. The Meeting was very largely attended and the proceedings were characterised by the greatest enthusiasm. The Hon'ble Rai Bahadur P. Ananda Charlu, C.I.E., was in the Chair. Proceedings began with the reading of a number of telegrams and letters from several well-known people, expressing sympathy with the objects of the Meeting and regretting their inability to be present. Among them we notice one telegram from the Rajah of Ramnad and one letter from the Private Secretary to H. H. the Gaekwar of Baroda, regretting the Maharajah's inability to preside on the occasion owing to ill-health.

The Hon'ble Mr. ANANDA CHARLU, in opening the Meeting, made a short speech alluding to the greatness of the Swami Vivekananda as a religious leader and reformer. He said that Madras had known the late Swami at his best, viz., when he returned here as a conquering hero from America. On that occasion the people of Madras had given him a reception the like of which he had seen nowhere in this country. At that time they rejoiced over his unrivalled success, and that evening they were met to lament his untimely death : not only to lament over the loss which he hoped would not be irreparable, but to keep his memory green in some tangible form in their midst, so that the influence for good which he had inaugurated might not fail, but might continue to operate. The Chairman next alluded to the impressions which the late Swami Vivekananda left on his mind on the four occasions on which he had the privilege of seeing him. It was impossible, he remarked, to have been anywhere near Swami Vivekananda without being strongly influenced by his presence ; his eloquence of voice and personal magnetism were very great indeed. He had by his work in America and other places raised the Hindus in the scale of nations and by the mission that he performed he had convinced foreigners that Hindus, who possessed an enlightened and great religion of the kind he had preached in America, could not be savages ! His great services to the country ought to stimulate in them that desire of generous recognition and enthusiasm which he deserved at the hands of the people of this country.

Mr. V. KRISHNASAMI IYER, in moving the first resolution, said :—

\* \* \* Vivekananda was gone, but as a Hindu he hoped and believed that he had not gone for ever. By saying so he did not mean the mere customary platitude that though the man was gone, his influence still lived. He believed the Swami would come to them again in another form

to do work nobler than he had done in the life that had just closed. A star of the first magnitude had disappeared from the Indian firmament, and as Hindus they believed that the star would rise again in the East to shed more lustre on this land. \* \* \*

It was no new thing for them to find their great religious teachers pass away in the plenitude of their wisdom and work. The great Sankaracharya had passed away at thirty-two, and Swami Vivekananda had departed at thirty-nine without finishing his work, the task of enlightening the West upon the wisdom of the East and of quickening the East itself into fresh life and activity. The first he had performed and the second he had left undone...

Swami Vivekananda had a scheme of rousing the people to a sense of their ancient greatness. He had an idea of founding an institution to train a number of Sannyasins who would have no attachment in this world and whose only end in life would be to uplift the masses of the country.....The Swami was not merely a great religious leader. His letters from America to his friends in Madras were full of sympathy, love and enthusiasm and were calculated to infuse into the minds of the young men of this country every kind of noble feelings.....As the great Sannyasin had left them, it was their duty to enshrine his memory in a suitable form.....

After Mr. V. C. Seshachariar and Mr. A. C. PARTHASARATHY NAIDU made eloquent speeches dwelling on the great services rendered to the country by the Swami and the necessity that there was to perpetuate his memory in a suitable form,—a proposition which was carried in solemn silence, the audience standing up,—Mr. P. R. Sundaram Iyer B.A. B.L. moved the next proposition in the following terms :—

That this Meeting resolves to perpetuate the memory and continue the work of the late Swami Vivekananda by establishing an institution in this City for the study and propagation of Hindu religion and philosophy.

He said that those who had the privilege of listening to the discourses of the late Swami before he went to America knew how very earnest he was and how very irresistible his arguments were, when he preached to them the necessity for the spiritual regeneration of the country. Many a time the Swami felt ashamed of the loss of spiritual power in this country of the Rishis. The Swami was very strong when he used to chide them, but he was also very careful to encourage them. They all knew that he was a great teacher, but he was not sure whether all of them were aware how great a patriot the late Swami was. If there was one thing that the Swami had been anxious to see done, it was to see the greatness of the country restored. He had gone to America to preach the religion of the Vedanta. He had seen that the men of his country had been going too much after the things of this world and any active

scheme to turn them from that direction would require a great deal of money. He knew that if the people of the West appreciated the Vedanta, they would give any amount of money for its propagation, and he knew also that if the Westerns appreciated the wisdom of the East the people of this country would feel ashamed of their own inertness and exert themselves to do their best. That was the reason why the Swami had gone to America before trying to work out his scheme in this country. The first thing which he had set himself to do after he returned from America was to propound a scheme of his own, which he was sorry to say had not yet been fully developed and worked out in all its details. The Swami's great desire had been to organise a band of earnest workers who would make it their sole duty to restore the spiritual supremacy of India in the whole world. He had made the Western world recognise that the ancient ancestors of the Hindus had seen and explored a great deal more of the world of Spirit than they had been able to do even up to the present day. He had made the West ready to help the East. He had great hopes of the Madras Presidency.....An example of the kind of worker that was wanted was Swami Ramakrishnananda who had been working amongst the people of Madras for the last five years silently and perhaps unknown to many. Other parts of the Presidency constantly applied for the services of similar men. Hence the necessity for starting an institution which might both serve as a Memorial of the late Swami and as a centre for the study and propagation of their religion and philosophy.....It was not only out of affection to the Swami but also out of affection to themselves and their philosophy that the Memorial should take that form.

Mr. V. RAMASEN seconded the proposition, and Mr. Bhuttasree Bala Saraswati Narayana Sastri B.A. B.L. supported it in an effective Tamil speech. The proposition was carried with acclamation.

Mr. C. V. KUMARASWAMI SASTRIAR B.A. B.L. moved the third Resolution, appointing a large and influential Committee to carry out the objects of the above Resolution. He said that the late Swami was eminently a seeker after God, an ennobler of humanity, not in the restricted sense of a particular caste or sect, but of humanity in general. His object was not to promote this or that particular one among rival faiths and contending factions. He was full of pity, hope and sympathy for all. He had pitied ignorance and hoped as time progressed people would be able to show to the world what golden thoughts lay hidden in the musty pages of their ancient sacred works. The work which the late Swami had set on foot was not the work of a solitary man but of a progressive stream of thinkers who had to sacrifice everything for the well-being of humanity and for the finding out of the eternal truth. It was with the object of providing such a stream of thinkers and workers



for the spiritual regeneration of their country that they were assembled there.

Mr. V. V. SREENIVASAN B.A. B.L. seconded the proposition which was carried unanimously. SWAMI RAMAKRISHNANANDA having read an earnest appeal to the Meeting for help towards the establishment of an "Ananda Mandir" in Madras, the Chairman brought the Meeting to a close.

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### BANGALORE.

A memorial meeting of the Vedanta Society of Bangalore was held on the 27th of July. The hall was gorgeously decorated with flowers and leaves and with the pictures of the sages of all religions. The central figure on one side was the symbol of Nataraja placed in an ornamented carlike *mandap*. On the other side was a photo of Swami Vivekananda seated in the meditative posture decorated with flowers and garlands. Amongst those present were a few Anglo-Indians, native Christians and Mahomedans. Mr. P. Venketa Rama Aiyer was proposed to the Chair. He said :—

".....The deep feeling of our hearts at the loss of him whom we all loved so deeply for his sanctity and acknowledged piety, for his cosmopolitan and broad-minded and philanthropic work in the cause of humanity, deprives us of every suitable expression of sorrow. *For deep calls unto deep* and the realisation of our heart's inmost sorrow is to be found in silence alone, not in utterance.....I have the sad duty to record our deepest and heartfelt sorrow at the loss which India and the world have sustained in the removal of Swami Vivekananda from the scene of his activity. Our hearts are too full to adequately express what we feel—his personality and his voice which moved the heart of India and the most advanced nations of the world, though invisible now, still live and for one such life, hundreds will rise to follow that glorious prophet and teacher's footsteps, and I hope you will all raise a shrine to his memory in your hearts and follow his sacred calling and carry out his plans....."

Mr. G. G. Narasimachariyar, the Vice-President of the Society said : "I had the peculiar privilege of introducing our beloved Swamiji's name to the Bangalore public eight years ago. Now as fate will have it, the very same person has been chosen by you to give expression to the

feelings of love we have for him, though we live more than a thousand miles away from his birthplace. Our chairman and myself are a few of the many who had the special privilege of becoming acquainted with the Swamiji from the very moment he set his foot in Madras. His learned disquisitions on various subjects, spiritual and otherwise, and above all, his wonderful love and sympathy for even the meanest of God's creatures, endeared him in a short time to the whole of Madras.

"First of all, I wish to tell you that nobody need feel sorry for the loss which the whole world has sustained by the untimely ascension of Swamiji. According to the Hindu Shastras,.....when an ordinary man dies he leaves his body to take another in pursuance of the laws of Karma. A great man is above the ordinary laws of Karma and is born at will and leaves the body at will for the good of humanity. One such was our beloved Swamiji. He had a certain message to give to the world, a certain mission to fulfil; therefore, he incarnated at will in his late august and holy body. His mission was fulfilled and he has thrown away the body like a man who throws away a worn-out coat.....His spirit is still working with us; he is still living amidst us; for does not the Lord say in the *shastras*, wherever My devotees assemble, wherever there is talking of God, there I am present. I may quote to you the words that Swamiji once wrote to a friend of mine in Madras. 'To work for the good of humanity has been my motto. Even though I die I shall still work for the salvation of India.' Friends, therefore work, work till you die; that is what you should do....."

Mr. Narasimachariyar then went on to narrate his reminiscences of Swamiji and to extol his many qualities of both the head and the heart..... He then spoke of the message of which the Swamiji was the bearer to suffering humanity and which it was his duty to echo that evening. \* \* \*

Continuing he said: "The great Ramakrishna Paramahansa came in time, lived in a hut and thought in seclusion. He represented the passive side of Brahman, though his life was the embodiment of practical religion. Another was necessary, one who personified the active side to carry and spread the message of his Lord throughout the length and breadth of the whole world. Vivekananda, our beloved Swamiji, was the person on whom this mantle fell. The two complements, Father and Son, supplied the one whole, fulfilled the one mission, which is to carry humanity as a whole to the highest goal of spirituality. Their greatest message to the world is the Harmony of religions,—that religion is independent of the externalities of sects, creeds and social customs and is something underlying all those and binding all men of multifarious practices into one harmonious whole.....Such a message was not specially intended for any one sect or nation, but was an appeal to all sects, to all nations, in fact, to the whole world.

"In Swamiji's opinion, there was nothing like scepticism, and it was only one of the different phases through which the Supreme Spirit manifested Itself in the world. To give up all human frailties, to be bold and brave and with the whole heart persevere till one reached the highest goal—the Universal Spirit within. The one advice which Swamiji gave in every one of his letters to his friends was, 'Patience, purity, and perseverance.' So long as one possessed these virtues, one need not be afraid of anything."

The lecturer gradually went on to speak on the glory of renunciation which formed an important theme of Swamiji's teachings. In the end, he exhorted the audience to imitate the Swamiji and to put into practice his teachings. Two other speakers, Mr. Theagaraya Iyer and Mr. Ganapathy Naiker spoke in Tamil on the importance of religion and the correct practice of it as consisting in observing it in the light thrown by Vivekananda, the most recent exponent of our oldest religion.

Mr. Stephens of Messrs. Higginbotham & Co., then came forward and said in a few well-chosen words his opinion of the Swamiji. He said that he was a bigoted Christian and an earnest student of religion. Nothing could make him grasp well the noble teachings of his Master. It was only after reading the lectures of Swamiji that he understood the secrets and glory of Christ's teaching. He therefore testified to the nobleness and universality of Swamiji's teachings and requested every one to join hands in fulfilling the unique message of the Swamiji. The chairman then arose and spoke as follows :—

".....We have met here to-day to express our sense of loss in the Mahasamadhi of Swami Vivekananda whose striking personality and commanding figure are fresh in my memory. Though my acquaintance with him was short, yet it was very instructive and useful to me. Many of you present here may not have had any opportunity for seeing him and benefit by his sweet discourses on religion. I therefore think it fit on this occasion to narrate to you some incidents in his life, as I knew from him and show what an all-round person he was." \* \* \*

He then narrated some of the principal events and charming anecdotes in the life of the Swami and spoke eloquently of his intellectual attainments, his masterly grasp of the abstruse metaphysical problems, his marvellous conversational powers flowing in mellifluous discourses on all matters, his timely wit and indomitable courage and presence of mind, his power of converting atheists and sceptics into religious anchorites, and many other sterling qualities of his character which made him a powerful magnet of attraction to one and all. Continuing he said in part as follows :—

"I was present when the Swami and another important person engaged in the same sphere of unselfish work for the good of humanity

grew to a heated controversy and the latter passed personal remarks, when the Swamiji put down the cynicism of the other by a few well-expressed words. It astonished me and made me see what a remarkable man he was. \* \* \*

Swamiji's masterly exposition of Free-will and Karma during a conversazione in the Mylapore Atheneum was unanswerable, and a few of us who heard him that day took it to be the best intellectual treat that man gave to man. \* \* \*

"He lived and worked for mankind and died at his post, at the very Math which was sacred to him and through him to the world even so soon as to-day. It is idle to measure the greatness of a person by newspaper obituary notices alone. There may not be a concensus of opinion. But in the Swami's case Madras which sent him to America, honoured him when he returned and condoled at his death in as suitable a manner, in a public meeting at Pachiyappa's Hall.....

"His death has given an opportunity for his admirers and direct followers to take up the work where the Swamiji has left it and work with his vigour and energy in the furtherance of the cause which he so nobly and ably headed. Just as the sons of a father establish each a household after the death of the latter and begin each to feel the responsibility, so the Swami's admirers who did till now put the whole work on him will have to wake up to keep untarnished the legacy left by him and rightly enjoyed both by them and by their brethren.



In a meeting of the Madras Hindu Theistic Mission at the Unity Hall, at which Messrs A. S. Mudaliar, Mohammad Abbas Hussain, C. W. Mackenzie and others took part, the following among other resolutions was proposed and adopted:—

That the Hindu Theistic Mission be known as the Vivekananda Mission.



A Meeting of the students of Zamorin's College, Calicut, was held to mourn the loss of the Swami Vivekananda.



A largely attended meeting of the Narasepatam public was held on the 13th of July to express their heart-felt sorrow at the sudden death of the Swami Vivekananda.

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In a public meeting of the citizens of Conjeeveram held on the 14th of July in the Hall of Pachaiyappa's High School with Mr. S. V. Kallapiran Pillai B. A., Sub-Magistrate, in the chair, the following among other resolutions was passed :—

That steps be taken to perpetuate the memory of Swami Vivekananda by ordering for a good-sized photo of his to be hung up in the Hall of Pachaiyappa's High School and by founding a scholarship or medal to be awarded annually, to a student of that school who shows proficiency in religious essays.

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The Cooranada Literary Association at a special meeting recorded its deep regret for the sudden death of Swami Vivekananda and felt it a national calamity.

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The news of the Swami Vivekananda's demise was received by the Dharmapuri public with intense sorrow. The Vivekananda Literary Society was closed as a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased. The members of the Society held a public meeting in the Vivekananda Town Hall under the presidency of the Civil Apothecary. Pandit Arunachela Aiyar then gave a sketch of the Swami's life in lucid and clear Tamil. Several others also spoke of the life and work of the great ascetic. It was resolved to send a message of condolence to Swami Brahmanandaji, President of the Ramakrishna Math at Belur. Another telegram was sent to Swami Ramakrishnanandaji at Madras by the local Ramakrishna Mission. The audience, which consisted of Hindus, Mahommedans and Christians, stood on their legs in solemn silence for a few minutes in token of their respect to the famous preacher when the meeting came to a close.

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Memorial meetings were held in various other places to express a deep sense of sorrow at the sudden passing away of the Swami Vivekananda, and to perpetuate his memory in some fitting manner by following in his footsteps. Indeed they are still being held in the form of his Birthday Anniversaries, and the founding of Sevashramas, Vivekananda Societies and Vedanta Societies, and Vivekananda Ashramas and Vivekananda Maths, &c.,—all being centres to mould lives of meditation and service. In the Birthday celebrations at the centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and in various other places, besides lectures on the life and teachings of the Swami Vivekananda, the chief feature is the feeding of thousands of the poor, irrespective of caste, creed or nationality. And fired with his ideal of humanitarian and philanthropic works as the best mode of worship, young men giving up the world are ever coming forward to consecrate their lives to the service of the diseased, the distressed and the helpless. Indeed, their lives of loving unselfishness, charity and self-sacrifice are, as said by a lecturer, the best memorial of the Swami Vivekananda.

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## APPENDIX F.

### HOW THE MOVEMENT WENT.—III.

*(From July 1899 to July 1902).*

Under the above heading were briefly described the works of Service and the preaching propaganda carried on by the Ramakrishna Mission till the month of June 1899, when the Swami Vivekananda sailed for the West for the second time (See Vol. III pp. 337-363). Continuing the narrative here till the Swami's passing, one notices that the new spirit of work and service for the suffering humanity which he had infused into his Gurubhais and disciples, did not abate when their guiding spirit was far away, but grew more and more making them ever ready to help the starving, and the distressed in any form, and to nurse the diseased even at the risk of their own lives. In the latter part of 1899, India was under the throes of a famine which was admitted as the severest that the country had seen in the last century, if not for some centuries past. With the modest and limited means at the disposal of the Brotherhood, the work accomplished by the Mission was, perhaps, not very much when we consider the extent and depth of the prevailing distress, but the record was admitted on all hands as certainly the most creditable. Besides, the example of such altruistic undertakings was bound to have its wholesome influence on the public generally. The Mission chose for its scene of labours the State of Kishangarh in Rajputana, which was hard hit in common with other places. Swami Kalyanananda was sent there in November to open a famine-relief centre and an orphanage, and thanks to the generous support he received from the Durbar he was instrumental in snatching from an untimely death as many as 55 boys and 30 girls, who were housed in two separate buildings kindly lent by the Durbar. Later the number rose to 141. On the average 400 persons received help daily. Ten of the orphan boys were found employment at the Carpet Factory, and 6 boys and 7 girls at the Cotton Mills. Major J. R. Dunlop Smith, the Famine Commissioner, who visited the orphanage at the end of February 1900, wrote in his report: ".....The children are in excellent condition and appear to receive every attention. They were all very happy....." Mr. G. R. Erwin, the Resident at Jeypore, being pleased with the work contributed Rs. 1,000 to the orphanage. Swami's Nirmalananda, Swatupananda and Atmananda also joined later and greatly

helped the work in various ways. "Their Orphanage," wrote *The Advocate* of Lucknow, "is a wonder of economy along with efficiency."

Again, seeing the urgency of opening a famine-relief centre in the Central Provinces, the Mission sent the Swami Sureshwarananda to Khandwa, who started work there in May 1900. The funds at his command being limited, the Swami determined to work along the line of supplementing the activities of the local authorities, as had been done at Kishangarh, and at the kind suggestion of the Deputy Commissioner of the Province, went in search of respectable families reduced to destitution, who would not come out to beg even though they might be at the point of death, and supplied them with food. And hundreds of people who were starving, being physically incapable of doing any work at the Government centres, were also inspected by the Swami and given sufficient quantities of rice, thus saving their lives. In nearly four months of work, the total number of persons relieved was 13,837, of whom 3,343 belonged to high-caste poor families.

On 24th September 1899, some parts of the Bhagalpur District in Behar were inundated by a devastating flood. Whole villages were swept away, entire families perished, and hundreds of people became quite destitute. Swami Akhandananda went from his Murshidabad orphanage to the stricken area, opened a relief centre at Ghoga and worked from 15th October to 20th December. Swami Sadananda was deputed from the Belur Math to help him. They succoured 45 villages, and nursed many helpless Cholera patients day and night. In one place the Swami Akhandananda taught the inhabitants how to disinfect, and distributed camphor, sulphur and incense for the purpose. By this means he made a village of *Chandals* free of Cholera. He also distributed pieces of cloth to 540 people, who had almost nothing on them. Of these 408 were destitute widows. Mr. J. G. Cumming, the magistrate and collector of the district, helped him with nearly half the money and took great interest in the work. When the work was closed he thanked the Swamis and the Ramakrishna Mission for the good work done by them.

When the terrible landslip occurred at Darjeeling in 1899, Swami Shivananda rendered necessary help to many persons made homeless and miserable by the catastrophe.

A medical relief work was also carried on by the Ramakrishna Mission in a rented house in Calcutta from 22nd June to 23rd October 1899.

As in the previous year, when Plague and Cholera broke out in Calcutta in the summer of 1900, but in a more virulent form, the workers of the Ramakrishna Mission in order to prevent the spread of the frightful epidemics did much sanitary work under the direction of the Swami Sadananda, which exacted the admiration and gratitude of the public,



The work was directed to the insanitary *bustees* of wards 1, 2 and 3, and extended through a period of five weeks. It was confined mostly to the poorest classes who were unable to pay for cleansing and disinfecting their huts, drains and closets which were kept in the most filthy condition. The kind and amount of work done will be realised when it is stated that within that short period no less than 1300 *bustee* huts and 64 *pucca* houses were cleansed and disinfected including drains and closets connected therewith, open spaces and surroundings of most of them in which heaps of refuse had accumulated for months were swept, and 160 cart-loads of refuse were removed. The thorough manner in which everything was done was testified to by the Sanitary Inspectors of the wards, the Divisional Superintendent, the Health Officer of Calcutta and the District Medical Officer, Plague Department, who inspected the work on several occasions and heartily thanked the Mission for the disinterested help it had rendered to improve the sanitation of the city. *The Indian Mirror* in its leader of 29th April wrote :—" \* \* \* The Ramakrishna Mission has its plague volunteers likewise. They are to be met within Calcutta in the dirtiest streets and filthiest *bustees*, helping to clear plague-spots, encouraging the people, consoling them in their affliction and teaching them to live clean lives. And this is done without the expenditure of much money. \* \* \*" The work was stopped only when the epidemic had so far subsided as to make its continuance unnecessary.

A plague camp was also opened at Vaniyambadi in Madras Presidency in the name of Ramakrishna by the local devotees of the Bhagavan and of Swamiji in March 1902 for treating helpless Hindu patients suffering from the dread disease.

Besides taking in hand temporary relief measures demanded by sudden emergencies caused by famine, flood, plague and other visitations of widespread misery, the Swami's idea was to cover the land with permanent centres of relief for giving all possible aid to the diseased, the poor, and the helpless people of his land. The idea of making worship and Sadhana of such service by seeing Narayana in them was a new innovation which augurs well for the country, in that it creates the national *Sraddhâ* or devotion to the people in the hearts of the young generation. In his private talks to young men and in some of his lectures in India, as is well-known, he earnestly sought to infuse this spirit into them. Though he had not the satisfaction of seeing how the seeds of his dearly-cherished desire have grown up into vigorous institutions since his passing, he was glad at heart to have started two Homes of Service, one at Benares and the other at Kankhal, under the charge of a few of his Sannyasin disciples, besides the orphanage at Murshidabad conducted by Swami Akhandananda. In Benares, the most ancient and living centre of Hinduism, considered the holiest city in India, besides

thousands of Sadhus who pass their days in study and meditation, depending upon *bhikshā* from the *Chhatrams*, there come large numbers of men and women, old and decrepit, awaiting to enter into Eternal Freedom after death. In spite of the charitable dispensaries and *Annasutras*, when these people and other poor pilgrims fall victims to disease or starvation, they are practically found lying in the streets helpless and uncared-for. The sight of such misery touched the hearts of two Brahmacharins of the Mission, who formed the Poor Men's Relief Association and set to work from 13th June 1900, to mitigate the distress of the sick and the helpless who were placed outside the reach of the existing conventional forms of charity. Up to 12th September for want of accommodation, assistance was given to them in the streets and *ghats*, or in the houses of the invalids. Subsequently a small house was rented in order to give them the full benefit of the care and attention of the workers. Out of this small beginning, the huge proportions which the present Home of Service has gradually attained with its large out-door dispensary, and its hospital with numerous wards and other necessary quarters constructed after the best sanitary standards, in its spacious grounds, are a monument of the untiring zeal and the constant self-sacrificing labours of the workers, supported by the handsome donations and the continued pecuniary help received from the public. Up to the end of 1912, the Home relieved no less than 43,753 indoor and out-door patients and sufferers from other sources, and the work has gone on increasing ever since in an exceptional degree.

Early in 1901 Swami Kalyanananda, a disciple of Swamiji's, during a pilgrimage to Hardwar, was deeply affected by the helpless condition of Sadhus in time of their illness, and felt an irresistible impulse to serve the afflicted with medical help and nursing. He communicated his resolve to his brother-disciple, the Swami Swarupananda of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, who fully shared in it, and both set to work begging for funds to start a Sevashrama, which they succeeded in doing in June 1901. A few phials of medicines were secured and a room was rented at Kankhal, with Swami Kalyanananda as doctor, nurse, accountant and all. The work steadily prospered, and early in 1902 during the *Kumbha mela* at Hardwar a branch centre was worked with great success at Hrishikesh, where a large number of Sadhus congregate to pass the winter months. With growing appreciation and support from the pious public, the scope of work gradually widened, permanent quarters for a hospital and out-door dispensary were constructed with several wards and the relief, which was at the outset confined to the indoor treatment of Sadhus only, was extended to all helpless pilgrims and poor people who sought the aid of the Home. The record of work done during thirteen and a half years up to December 1914, is a striking evidence

of its utility and importance, as within that period it has relieved 66,362 indoor and outdoor patients.

The Sevashramas at Brindaban and Allahabad being established several years after Swamiji's passing, do not come within the scope of this chapter. Mention may only be made that during the six years ending in 1912, the former treated 66,450 indoor and outdoor patients, and the latter treated 5,856 patients in 1912. The work of relief is carried on in all the centres mentioned above in a purely non-sectarian spirit, and Hindus from the highest to the lowest caste, as well as Mahomedans, Christians and people of other religious persuasions are served with equal care and attention. In considering the works accomplished by all these Sevashramas it must be remembered that, if they had not had to encounter a keen day-to-day struggle between the increasing demands for Seva and the inadequate supply of funds to meet them, they could have accomplished an incalculably greater amount of work with a more proper degree of efficiency.

These four permanent charitable institutions of the Mission, it will be noticed, have sprung up in the four holy places of pilgrimage, which hold undisturbed sway over the minds of millions of all classes of Hindus. "The Hindu standpoint," as has been remarked in the First General Report issued by the Ramakrishna Mission, "is that the most fundamental concern of man is religion and all social and civic activities must grow out of and revolve round that centre. In India, for example, the national characteristic is to develop cities round the temples, while in Europe cities evolve round centres of commercial and political activity. The Hindu Shastras also specially extol in one voice, charity in places of pilgrimage. In fact, it is a part of national economy in India to direct the liberality of the people towards those who devote their lives more or less to the cause of spirituality. This important principle together with the universal impulse of charity in the presence of distress, underlies the noteworthy fact of the Sevashramas springing up in the holy places....." Moreover, as says *The Brahnavadin*: "The Ramakrishna Homes of Service represent a spontaneous effort of the higher federation of Hinduism to come to the assistance of the local, or communal, or purely civic consciousness, in an age of crisis and transition. Its birth is in religion, but its goal, as befits the modern world, is civic. Religion inspires, but does not limit its activities. The brotherhood seeks to serve the city. In the fact that such service arises, and arises spontaneously, we find a proof of the undying strength of the Motherland. In the aim it proposes to itself, we read the adequacy of the Sanatana Dharma to every phase of the development of civilisation." \* \* \* "The Ramakrishna Mission is now the centre of vast spiritual influence, and all that is good and all that is holy, in this land and many

other lands in the East and the West, is certain to respond to that influence."

As is well-known, Swamiji had well-defined schemes for the education of Hindu boys and girls on truly national lines. Though the Ramakrishna Mission was not in a position to take it up on an adequate scale, some humble beginnings were made in the direction of a practical solution of the problem before and after his passing. The notable of these were the Sister Nivedita's Girls' School at Calcutta, and the Ramakrishna Orphanage at Sargachi in Murshidabad District. The Swami Akhandananda instructed by the Swami Vivekananda himself as how to proceed in the proper lines in regard to the education and uplifting of the masses has been ever since laying down his life by slow degrees trying to solve this most important problem, though constantly handicapped for want of means and resources. His scheme in general is well worth reproducing here from the First General Report of the Ramakrishna Mission :—

"His idea is to start model institutions on a scale calculated to illustrate to educated men the methods by which the rural classes are to be approached and the light of knowledge is to be diffused among them. These institutions will provide respectively for the following items of work : 1st, Orphanage work,—taking parental care of rural children having none to look after them ; 2nd., relief work,—combating disease, misery in any form, and sudden scourges of nature ; 3rd., general education ; 4th., training in useful industries and arts ; 5th., training in modern agricultural methods ; 6th., separate provision for giving medical aid, nursing, refuge and useful education to girls ; and 7th., organising of all these classes of work in the district centre and its rural branches with a spiritual outlook on life and its activities. Thus, with a central workers' Ashrama conducted on a religious basis, there will be six separate institutions set up side by side in this district centre where the whole work of the uplifting of the masses will be continued. From this district centre as the headquarters will be spread a network of village organisations specialising technical training and relief according as the needs of the local area dictate. The district Ashrama and the Orphanage will also make it a point to initiate trained young men from the poorer classes into a life consecrated to all this work and scatter them throughout the rural areas with or without some professional pursuit for their own livelihood as the case may demand, the idea being to make rural people fully participate in all the nobler ideals of life for which the Ramakrishna Mission stands, not simply as passive recipients but also as their active promulgators.....Evidently it is proper to make our help reach the rural people who live in the villages and not to make them come to us in the towns for that help. The nation, we should remember,

lives in the rural cottages, and it is there that we should have to fight malaria, ignorance and poverty."

Passing on to a brief survey of the Mathis and Ashramas established during the latter part of Swamiji's lifetime, mention must be made of the Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama of Benares. A small beginning in the direction of a religious institution for inculcating the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna was made there in 1900 by Swami Achalananda, then a Brahmacharin. In June 1902, Swami Shivananda was sent by Swamiji from the Belur Math to start an Ashrama on a permanent and wider basis to carry on the missionary and monastic work at Benares. The objects of the Ashrama are, (1) to train young men in Brahmacharyam and mould their character after the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and the Swami Vivekananda ; (2) to train spiritual and secular educators by encouraging arts and industries, and popularising the study of Vedānta and other systems of religious thought as interpreted by the above great teachers ; (3) to carry on the work inaugurated by them, of fraternising with the various creeds of the world knowing them to be so many phases of the one Eternal Universal Religion ; (4) to give primary education to boys by opening a school in the Ashrama ; (5) to translate the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and of Swamiji in Hindi. By dint of perseverance and devotion of the Swami Shivananda, and, later on, of Brahmachari Chandra, the Ashrama has gradually risen to eminence and become a permanent and useful institution in the holy city.

From the year 1900, the Swami Vijnanananda commenced work at Allahabad with the Brahmavadin Club, which had been started by some earnest followers of Swamiji for the study and discussion of religious subjects. Later on, the Swami considered it proper to invest his work with a public character and founded a Math in the city, dedicated to purely monastic purposes, with a Sevashrama connected with it.

The Vivekananda Town Hall was built at Dharmapuri, in Salem District, through the exertions of the local Zamindar, Mr. D. G. Muni-sawmy Naidu. It was formally opened by Mr. C. G. Spencer, Sub-Collector, on 25th August 1901. Swamiji consented to associate his name with the building. A Math building was also constructed on the same plan at Vaniyambadi by Mr. C. Venkatasawmy Naidu. He frequently went touring through the surrounding villages delivering lectures on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and performing Bhajanas, and created a great interest in the cause of the Mission.

Throughout the length and breadth of India, and specially in the Madras Presidency, one comes upon nowadays towns and villages possessing Vivekananda Societies. A group of young men fired by the glorious name band themselves together with the idea of assimilating and

inculcating the teachings of the Vedanta as explained by Swamiji and of doing practical humanitarian works. The first of these Vivekananda Societies we find started on 20th January 1900, at Pudur in Vaniyambadi through the earnest exertions of Mr. Venkatasawmy Naidu. It was opened by the Swami Ramakrishnananda amidst the great enthusiasm of the local gentry, and has ever since been conducting its noble mission with great credit. The other Vivekananda Societies started in the Madras Presidency and worked under the guidance of the Swami Ramakrishnananda were those at Vaniyambadi, Nikundi, Arasampathi, Barur, Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri. The work carried on by them comprised Vedanta classes and lectures on the Vedanta, Puja, Bhajana, teaching, and feeding the poor.

Turning to the propaganda work carried on in foreign lands, we find the Sister Nivedita working in England and Scotland for nearly a year from the latter part of 1900, as she had done in America prior to this, educating the public opinion on the life and ideals of Indian womanhood, dispelling many of the false notions that were current, and presenting an altogether new light, with regard to them. Wherever she lectured she set forth with her usual vehemence her scheme of educating the Indian women on true national lines. All such work done by Western women, she insisted, must be based upon a patient and reverent study and a thorough knowledge of their lives, their philosophy and their customs. They should not ride rough-shod over their prejudices, but thoroughly Hinduise themselves, and educate and develop their particular inborn characteristics. She pointed out that Hinduism with all its faults was the most magnificent system of civilisation and supplied the finest educational instrument that the world had ever seen. The great ideal of Indian womanhood, she pointed out, was not romance but renunciation, and that this ideal should be strengthened and not impaired in giving the Hindu women education on modern practicality.

In the period under review, besides the work carried on by the Swami Vivekananda in the West, and especially in California as already described, striking progress was achieved through the untiring exertions of the Swami Abhedananda in the United States of America. Through the generous subscriptions and co-operation of students and friends, the headquarters of the Vedanta Society of New York was established on a suitable site with its class-rooms, office and library, on 15th October 1899, and the Swami Abhedananda resumed his public lectures from the next week in the Tuxedo Hall and in Madison Avenue, and continued them throughout the winter and spring on Sunday afternoons. He also lectured and held classes in the Vedanta Society during the week days. On June 1st, he addressed the New England Cremation Society of Boston at their anniversary meeting, and on the next day spoke before

an audience of 1,000 persons at the anniversary of the Free Religious Association of America on "The Conception of Immortality". Both the lectures were most favourably received. After visiting Waltham, Concord and Walden Pond, he went to Newport and gave an address on 20th June in the parlour of Ladd Villa on the "Religious Ideas of the Hindus." Rev. Dr. Cutter, a Unitarian minister who introduced the Swami, greeted him at the close of the meeting saying, "Swami, I do not know whether I have made you a better Hindu, but surely you have made me a better Christian." On the next day, the Swami gave another parlour talk in the city. On July 1st, he went to the White Mountains in New Hampshire as the guest of Mr. Herschel C. Parker of the Appalachian Mountain Club of Boston, and on the 8th, spoke before it on the "Philosophy of the Hindus." He then went to Worcester, Mass., to attend the summer school for teachers in Clark University. He attended courses on child-study, Physiology, Mineralogy, Anatomy, Philosophy, Anthropology with laboratory appliances, and delivered a lecture before the students on the Philosophy of the Hindus, which was highly appreciated. Then he made a journey of 500 miles to Lily Dale, the summer home of the Spiritualists, and on invitation from them attended their seances and meetings and spoke on Spiritualism as understood by the Indian sages. So favourable and profound was the impression made for the Vedanta philosophy that a permanent body of students was formed to continue the study of the Vedanta. After visiting the summer school that was being held at Chantunqua, the Swami went in the middle of August to Greenacre, Maine, another journey of several hundred miles, and lectured thrice before the Monsalvat School for the Study of Comparative Religions, which used to be held annually under the overspreading branches of an ancient tree known as "The Swami's Pine," since the Swami Vivekananda taught there. The subjects were: "Is Hinduism Pantheistic?" "Re-incarnation", and "The Spiritual Influence of India in the West." Receiving there a wire from the Swami Vivekananda on his arrival in America in company with the Swami Turiyananda he hastened to his home in the Catskill Mountains. After spending ten happy days with them he returned to New York on October 1st to resume the work of the Vedanta Society. During these travels of 2,000 miles or more, the Swami met and spoke to several thousands of people, many of whom were highly educated, prominent in the professions, or engaged in higher education and in religious work.

The work of the Vedanta Society of New York for the season 1899—1900 began from the middle of October with Swami Abhedananda delivering a series of ten Sunday public lectures at the Tuxedo Hall up to December, which were very largely attended. Week-day meetings were regularly held at the headquarters, where the Swami gave a course of

lectures on Karma Yoga on Tuesday evenings, interviews and personal instructions by appointment on Wednesday afternoons, class-instruction followed by meditation on Thursday evenings, and readings from the Upanishads with comments on Saturday mornings. Questions and answers followed all the lectures and classes, and there was a daily meditation hour from 4 to 5 P.M. The Sunday public lectures at the Tuxedo Hall ended on 1st April, and the Swami Abhedananda after a long and successful season of hard work left New York on April 6th to fulfil some engagements to lecture in other cities such as, Cambridge and Worcester, Massachussetts, and other places in the vicinity of Boston.

After visiting Worcester, Mass., the Swami Abhedananda lectured at Lynn on the "Religion and Philosophy of the Hindus" before the Outlook Club to an audience of 300 women, it being a women's Club. In Waltham, Mass., he spoke before the Psychomath Society on the "Motherhood of God." On 22nd April he addressed the Conferences for the Comparative Study of Religions in Cambridge, Mass., his topic being, "Ramakrishna, A Real Mahatman." Prof. Lanman and Prof. Fay of the Harvard University listened with interest to the lecture, the former, the celebrated Professor of Sanskrit in the Harvard University, addressing the audience on the "Spirituality of the Hindus." The Swami was the honoured guest of the Charming Club of Boston on the 23rd at a reception given in the Vendome Hotel, and was invited to speak after dinner. On the 26th he addressed an audience of 800 persons on the "Religious Ideas of the Hindus" at the Liberal Congress of Religions that was being held at Boston at the time. The lecture proved to be most engrossing. Dr. R. Heber Newton of New York, one of America's most eminent clergymen spoke in appreciative terms of Hindu thinkers and spiritual leaders. After the lecture Swami Abhedananda said to him, "You have paid us a great tribute" "You deserved it," was the emphatic reply. That same evening he was invited to dine with Prof. Lanman. He expressed great sympathy and interest in the Vedanta work which the Swamis were conducting in that country. The Swami made him and Dr. Newton honorary members of the Vedanta Society. The Swami also met and interested by his talks some of the distinguished professors of the Harvard University, such as, President Eliot, Prof. Lyons, and Prof. Fay, and also C. C. Everett of Divinity School. On 29th he attended a lecture by Prof. Royce on Nietzsche, the great German philosopher. After the lecture he was asked by the chairman to make some remarks on the subject. In his address the Swami showed the difference between Nietzsche's philosophy and the principles of the Vedanta. The next day he returned to New York.

All these activities created an ever-growing interest in the Vedanta,



which was evidenced in many ways,—in loving and reverent attitude to the Swamis, in attendance at the meetings, in financial support, in the sale of Vedanta literature, in application to the Swamis to lecture in various places and to write articles for periodicals &c., and in the notices in the newspapers showing respectful consideration of the Vedanta philosophy and religion. The Swami proved himself not only an able and efficient teacher, but furthered the success of the work in every other way, by his remarkable organising power, sound judgment and consideration, careful attention to the needs of the Society to the minutest details, and by his power of adaptability to Western methods of work and teaching.

The Vedanta Society had recently removed to a choicer locality and more commodious quarters at 58th Street, occupying an entire house of four floors. This gave a new impetus to the work. During the summer the Sunday afternoon lectures were delivered in the Society rooms, and the classes and other meetings were continued as mentioned before. During the course of the season 1899—1900 Swami Abhedananda formed a Yoga class and gave practical lessons in breathing exercises, concentration, meditation and self-control to such earnest students and members as applied for instructions.

During June and most part of July Swami Vivekananda stayed in the Vedanta Society rooms and helped his Brother-Swamis by holding classes and delivering lectures. The Sister Nivedita also lectured twice on "The Ideals of Hindu women," and "The Ancient Arts of India". Her talks and lectures were most entertaining and instructive to the audience. The Vedanta classes and lectures in New York were closed in the middle of July and Swami Abhedananda after taking a little rest of nearly two weeks in the Adirondack Mountains went to Chesterfield, Indiana, and lectured on 5th August before the Indiana Association of Spiritualists. The audience numbering about 7,000 people were enthusiastic. On the 7th he spoke on "Immortality," and on the 9th on "Re-incarnation." Then he went to Greenacre *via* Massachusetts and gave two lectures on Bhagavadgita and held meditation meetings under the "Swami's Pine." The closing lecture of the Greenacre season was the lecture of the Swami Vivekananda on "My Master," which was read by Swami Abhedananda and greatly enjoyed by all. On 23rd September, Swami Abhedananda lectured before the Appalachian Mountain Club of Boston at a beautiful summer resort called Minnewasca. He then returned to New York and spoke before the Metaphysical Convention on the "Universality of the Vedanta." He was kindly invited to represent the Hindu and Sanskrit scholars of India at a public meeting held in the Columbia University as a tribute to the memory of the late Prof. Max Muller, and spoke on behalf of India acknowledging

her indebtedness to him for the great services done by him in the cause of her philosophy and religion.

Swami Abhedananda resumed his public lectures on Sunday afternoons at Carnegie Lyceum, New York, from November for the season of 1900—1901. He also gave a special course of lectures at the Vedanta library on Tuesday evenings and held Yoga classes on Thursday evenings. The Children's class which had been started by the Swami Turiyananda was also reopened. On December 13th, the Swami was invited to speak before the Council of Jewish women, at Temple Israil, in the city, and gave an interesting talk on the Festivals of the ancient Jews. His broad and liberal views regarding Judaism were highly appreciated. On the first Sunday of the New Year, it was most *apropos* that he should speak on the "Religious Need of the Twentieth Century," in the Carnegie Lyceum. The lecture was favourably noticed in the prominent papers. His lectures on "How to be a Yogi" drew large audiences, many of whom were so impressed that they flocked in numbers to him afterwards to receive instructions on Yoga practices. The Swami discreetly chose from amongst them only those who were really earnest, and opened another Yoga class for these new students. On February 19th he spoke on "My Master," which made a profound impression on everyone. Sri Ramakrishna's Birthday anniversary was fittingly celebrated on the next day, as was the Christmas Day before.

Swami Abhedananda left New York at the end of June and after a few days at the Buffalo Fair and a visit to Cleveland went to California. On his way he met friends on all sides who considered it a privilege to render him every service in their power. Invitations to talk and lecture were everywhere pressed upon him. He reached San Francisco on the 29th of July. During his stay there he met the class of the Vedanta Society at its regular meetings and gave a public lecture at the Union Square Hall on September 1st on "What is Vedanta?" On the urgent solicitation of Prof. Howisson, professor of philosophy in the University of California, Berkeley, he delivered a lecture on the 6th before the faculty and students of that institution. After staying for a few days at the Shanti Ashrama and the Vedanta centre at Los Angeles he returned to New York at the beginning of October, 1901, and was highly pleased with the encouraging state of affairs that met him on his arrival. He resumed the Vedanta work for the season of 1901—1902 with unusual strength and vitality gained during his restful vacation spent in his journey to the Pacific coast. He began his Sunday public lectures at the Carnegie Lyceum and conducted the classes and other meetings in the Vedanta Society as in the past year. We need not recount his varied activities here in detail any more. Suffice it to say that it was greatly due to his untiring perseverance and faithfulness that the message of

Vedanta steadily spread into broader fields and gained a firmer foothold in the lives of many American students. Each succeeding lecture found him making a larger application and attracting greater numbers, who became earnest students of the philosophy he taught with such impressive eloquence, simplicity, and directness. Under his able control and management, the work of organisation was fully accomplished, and the Society came to be accepted and recognised as an established fact by prominent persons and even by many ministers of the Christian Church. Everything seemed to point to an awakening on the part of the public to the fact that the Vedanta was a power to be reckoned with in the United States.

The Swami Turiyananda began work in Montclair, near New York, holding a class on Tuesday afternoons, and soon won the love and veneration of all who came in contact with him. A new feature of work in New York was in his charge, this being the Children's class on Saturday afternoons, in which moral instructions were given by him through stories from the *Hitopadesha* and other Indian books in a most interesting and helpful manner. He also conducted a meditation class with an increasing number of students. The lectures and classes in the Vedanta Society of New York were conducted by him during April, May and part of June of the year 1900, in the absence of the Swami Abhedananda, and his presence was of great advantage and help to the students. Later he went to Cambridge as the guest of Mrs. Ole Bull and delivered an address before the Cambridge Conference on Sankaracharya. After returning to New York he left for California to work there and to establish a Shanti Ashrama in a beautiful and secluded place in the mountains in the San Antone Valley, Santa Clara County, about 12 miles from the Lick Observatory. The large tract of land there was the gift of Miss Minnie C. Boock. On the 8th of July, the Swami Turiyananda arrived at Alhambra, near Los Angeles. Thence he went to Los Angeles and worked there for a couple of weeks. On the 26th of July he arrived at San Francisco and took charge of the work of the Vedanta Society there. On 29th he gave an address on the Gita at the Home of Truth. He held meditation classes in the Society until August 3rd, when accompanied by twelve students he went to establish the Shanti Ashrama, and moulded the lives of the students who lived with him, in a remarkably spiritual way. On the 24th of January 1901, the Swami resumed his work in the city and as he laid greater emphasis on meditation and other practical spiritual exercises, he daily held meditation classes from 31st January to March 26th at the hall of the Vedanta Society, with regular lectures alternately on the Gita and Raja Yoga on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. On March 26th the Swami left for Los Angeles where he taught and lectured for several weeks, returning later to the Ashrama. In September,

in the company of a few students he made a trip to Lake Donner and thence returned to San Francisco and continued his work there until December 31st. Then he again went to Los Angeles and later to the Shanti Ashrama, where he trained the students who accompanied him, in the practices of meditation. Unfortunately under the severe strain to which he put himself in the work of training his pupils his health broke down, and according to the request of the Swami Vivekananda he returned to India for rest and recuperation, sailing on the 6th of June, 1902. A farewell reception was given to him by his devoted students, who were too loath to part from their beloved teacher who literally sacrificed himself to initiate them in the joys and mysteries of higher life.

In India the preaching aspect of the work of the Mission was carried on more in the time-honoured Indian way than by giving platform lectures; that is to say, it silently permeated the masses and the educated community by means of personal contact with the teachers, without any apparent organisation or business methods. Scores of persons who were drawn to the personality and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and of the Swami Vivekananda, flocked to the Belur Math and other established centres of the Order to receive instructions from the Brotherhood and profit by the examples of their lives of renunciation, service and devotion. The Swami Saradananda, however, went out to preach in Eastern Bengal and delivered lectures and talks at Dacca and Barisal in December 1899, and the Swami Ramakrishnananda also did the same in various places of the Madras Presidency. Their activities created a deep impression wherever they went bearing the message of Sri Ramakrishna, and won many new and enthusiastic adherents to the cause. The Swami Saradananda since his return from Dacca also lectured regularly at the Sunday meetings of the Ramakrishna Mission in Calcutta. He also organised the Belur Math in a remarkable way, laying particular emphasis on Tapasya and meditation as the best means of moulding the lives of the young Brahmins and Sannyasins, and training them for future work. Thus, he instituted the practice of unbroken meditation in the chapel throughout the whole night and the morning, by turns, each member meditating for one hour and being succeeded by another. Some also went out for *bhiksha*, and sometimes *Homa* was performed or a Dhuni was kindled at night under the shade of a tree, where meditation was continued for hours, concluding with religious talks and discussions, or with singing songs and hymns.

It would be too long to continue recording further the extensive preaching propaganda and the works of service carried on by the Brotherhood of the Order through its many Vedanta centres in India and abroad and its Sevashramas and other institutions during the years that followed. Suffice it to say that the spiritual zeal and the selfless

activities of the inspired Leader have never flagged in his co-workers and disciples and very many new centres have been opened, which are carrying on their noble mission of disseminating the sublime principles of practical Vedanta far and wide. Indeed, since Swamiji's passing away, the work has grown beyond the most sanguine expectations of the Order. The spirit of Swamiji is ever working with newly-added powers not only in the active participators in the work, but in unthought-of quarters leavening whole masses and individuals with his uplifting ideas, breaking down the bondages of religious ignorance and bigotry, and of debasing customs and crystallised superstitions, and opening up a new vision of life, its purpose and its goal. The voice of a great Spirit has verily spoken again, delivering Its Divine Message of Love, Light and Liberty to the ever-erring and forgetful humanity,—a Spirit whose embodiment was seen in the personality of the Swami Vivekananda. And though man here and there blinded by selfishness may succeed in drowning that voice, but momentarily, in the din of mutual strife, hatred, jealousy and destruction of one another, ignoring the divine ideal and purpose of life, it will assuredly rise rejuvenated and triumphant, for the Supreme Soul of Illumination took human form as Ramakrishna, and the Time-Spirit bodied Itself forth and worked amongst men as Vivekananda.

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## CONCLUSION.

The present work is now finished. It has been decided to make a separate book of the Teachings of the Swami Vivekananda, as a fitting complement to these volumes of the "Life", so that gaining an exhaustive survey of the Swami's Message and Teachings, the readers will be more readily enabled to understand the Man and his works, and to enter into that world in which he thought and moved and served and prayed.

Now is finished the strenuous Sadhana of twelve long years of the authors and the editors of these Volumes. Naturally, it is a moment of supreme gratification to them. How far the *Siddhi*, or the successful culmination of their self-imposed task of love, has been achieved, depends upon the judgment and the appreciation of the readers. But for themselves, the authors and the editors will consider their labours amply rewarded, if the reading of these volumes awaken and inspire the soul of even a single individual to make the ideals of Swamiji his own, to mould his life according to his teachings, and to work his life out for the fulfilment of the Mission for which the great World-Teacher lived and worked and died, and which he has left to the present generation and to those that are to come after, as a unique and priceless trust,—which is the realisation of the Divinity in man, nay, in all living creatures,—calling upon all to "Awake! Arise! and stop not till the Goal is reached!"

OM BRAHMAPANAMASTU!

OM! SHANTIH! SHANTIH! SHANTIH!

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HERE ENDS THE FOURTH AND LAST VOLUME OF  
THE SEMI-CENTENARY BIRTHDAY MEMORIAL  
EDITION OF THE LIFE OF THE SWAMI  
VIVEKANANDA BY HIS EASTERN AND  
WESTERN DISCIPLES AT THE  
ADVAITA ASHRAMA,  
HIMALAYAS.

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## PRINTER'S ERRORS.

PAGE	LINE	FOR	READ
13	16	wondering	wandering
41	3	mountains	mountain
41	20	and time,	time, and
48	27	you able	you be able
53	8	night	might
63	29	carelessness	carelessness
68	22	firmament	firmament
76	11	नक्षत्रारायप्सरसो	नक्षत्रारायप्सरसो
90	3	prayars	prayers
90	4	Agreat	A great
92	31	discordassu	discordance
95	(Heading)	THE LEAPING FLAMES OF DEATH.	CELESTIAL EFFULGENCE.
106	7	their	other
122	37	ising	raising
124	15	treasu	treasure
136	2	could	would
150	26	himself,"	himself,
152	22	as	so as
155	37	ot	not
156	1	, you	having seen, you
181	11	Religious	Religions
181	20	shakeable	shakable
187	16	religio	religion
189	10	uttera ce	utterance
204	42	ific	tific
207	40	weary	weary and
222	26	instiable	insatiable
235	10	friend	friend,
248	33	fac	fact
266	12	INDA	INDIA
271	43	philosophica	philosophical
275	1	GAJARATI	GUJARATI
287	(Heading)	CONTEM ARY	CONTEMPORARY





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